

HOME  
THOUGHTS

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## HOME THOUGHTS

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Mary D. Walker.  
from Miss Wiener

Buchanan 1901.

# HOME THOUGHTS

By C.



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*Whatever degree of success this reprint of "Home  
Thoughts" may express, I desire gratefully to  
associate with my friend*

WILLIAM A. LINN

(Late Managing Editor of the New York Evening Post)

*to whose encouragement and fostering care they owe  
their "local habitation and their name"*

C

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# HOME THOUGHTS

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## I

### A TUFT OF HEPATICAS

**O**N the Saturday which lies between the gloom of Good Friday and the joyous dawn of Easter morning, it does not seem possible to write of every-day affairs, and Home Thoughts, while they may not take on themselves the deepest significance of the religious character of either the great fast or the glorious festival, naturally fall into the mood which rules the world.

The shop windows are gay with color and beautiful with delicate fabrics full of varying tender tints: gazing into the florist's window, the poor covet, and within the doors the rich buy, flowers which the most stolid cannot pass without a longing desire to possess. The graceful branches of the genesta and the cheery faces of the daffodils seem to have held sunshine captive and give light. There

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is an expansive, free, receptive air, which one cannot describe, noticeable everywhere. Dwellings no longer seem intended solely for shelter and defence against the elements, but as gathering places for folk to be happy in, and the shop doors swing to and fro, with a curious sense of welcome, alien to the mere thought of trade and bargain.

There is a difference even in the aspect of the people; they have lost that high-shouldered look of shrinking from the cold, and walk along freely and with a more elastic step, and nine-tenths of the women have a blossom on their breasts. The soft clouds float high above the smoky city, and the sunshine, falling upon the winter-beaten walls, has that golden quality which tells the initiated that it has come to waken life.

On my desk stands a small earthen pot filled with a tuft of hepaticas, lifted by kindly hands and brought to me as a harbinger of spring. There were blossoms and buds, modest little darlings robed in gowns of lilac and white, when first it came; they, for the greater part, have run their short race and

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## A Tuft of Hepaticas

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vanished, but now sturdy leaflets are pushing their way up through the moss to seek the warmth of my window. Their trefoiled leaves are folded and closed, and they bend their heads downward, still wrapped in their soft fur coverings, as if timid regarding what they shall find above the dark surface of their winter hiding-place. Set where the warm morning sun can gain full access to their hearts, it is a delight to see their shy yet steadfast unfolding, under this beneficent influence. It sets one thinking of all the hill-sides lying towards the south, where endless quantities of frail blossoms and gently stirring leafage are lifting themselves to clothe the earth with beauty; of woodlands where, under dun coverings of dead leaves, arbutus flowers are giving forth their delightful odors, and of thousands upon thousands of anemones and frail spring beauties rising in fairy circles at the roots of trees still bare; and of places where, by looking upward, one can see against the mellowing sky the expanding leaf-buds bursting their marvellous winter coverings. Says Carlyle, "From a small window one

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may see the infinite." My pot of hepaticas have shown me all the handiwork of spring.

"The restitution of all things"; that is nature's spring song, and no wonder that it is dear to man. All the lost things torn from us by autumn winds and frost have come again; not new things, but those we loved last year. We cannot miss one lovely line, nor fragile bit of color; the faint fragrance has not changed its delicate refreshment, but lures us with the self-same woodland sweetness. High hopes of dearer things, lost to his sight, cheer man's heart as he notes this.

I knew a woman broken-hearted, and living in a childless home, who comforted herself by planting great beds of hyacinths, when in the autumn all nature was dying. Nothing looks more hopelessly dead than a hyacinth bulb; it is enveloped in fibrous husks, one over the other, brown, dry, utterly, hopelessly dead. The finer sorts bearing their distinctive names stand out from the mass of their large family as individuals; this gardener planted only such, and at each bed she hollowed to receive the bulb, she firmly placed

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## A Tuft of Hepaticas

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a clearly written name. Under the frosty November moonlight the great beds looked like miniature cemeteries filled with tiny head-stones. When December came they were covered wholly out of sight with thick coatings of dry leaves, and the woman looked out at them even when the snow added yet another covering, and waited for the spring with an interest which never flagged.

When April came and the outer wrap was drawn away, the rich green tufts of leaves pushed themselves towards the light; when mid-May gave them the warmth they needed, each full truss stood in its appointed place, true to its name and nature. The lines softened about the woman's patient mouth, and her eyes brightened. "See," she would say; "how true they are; they are exactly as I looked for them to be. Not a mark is wanting." She said nothing of a different garden, far away, where the children she had lost were sleeping, but we knew what her thoughts were like.

The old grow older as winter draws near, and feel their "natural force abating" with

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## Home Thoughts

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the death of the flowers and the falling of the leaves. They lose heart and hope and find it hard to make an effort to use the strength which remains to them. Spring's influence is almost as great upon them as upon the vegetable world; the sunshine creates a desire to live, and they become eager to see how Nature is clothing herself again with loveliness and strength.

And as to the churchman "all Sundays are little Easters," so in the family life all spring-times bring back thoughts of experiences which have been, like risings again from trials that have been deathlike in their tenacity and in their power to kill hope. All this expansion and glow of light and warmth and color, all this renewal of strength, is the only fitting type of these comingsto life again after agonies of fear and distress.

They who have watched beside beds where, in feeblest possible rhythm, a heart beloved has faintly beaten, until there was a doubt whether it moved at all, and after losing all hope have slowly marked a little added force come back, and watched a tinge of color

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## A Tuft of Hepaticas

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return to a ghastly cheek, and heard a voice, long silent, speak, know what coming to life again means. They realize the idea of resurrection.

Men who have seen fortune slip away from them, and found caution and acumen and grasp of circumstances wholly futile, and stood on the verge of ruin, and at the last ebb of power have seen the tide turn and their place among men restored to them at some unlooked-for moment, know what it means when it is said that life has been given back to a man.

And a yet dearer, higher similitude comes to a mother who has lost all hope for a son determined to cast himself down and live within the circle of debasing influences, but who casts them off and walks the earth again master of himself and once more a free man. The hour of his birth, though he were her first-born, is as nothing to this return to a life worth living.

Though there may be no mental recognition of the reflex action of the teaching of the spring, yet it is this accumulation of experience

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which makes our hearts glad, and sends us forth to greet each other with congratulations where the sun is giving an emerald hue to the grass and the wind is shaking loose the red blossoms of the maples.

One lovely token of the deep-rooted enjoyment of reviving nature is the eagerness with which charitable people agitate means to insure a week or two of country life to the poor. The waifs of the street become sources of renewed interest, and desire grows into effort to see each grimy little face in country surroundings, and set every pair of shoeless feet racing over green fields. The impetus seems to come with the vernal equinox, and to be as perennial as the stirring sap in the tree-trunks.

Happy are they who turn toward country homes. Nothing more refreshing comes into a tired man's way than his first visit to his country place after the tide has turned and the stir of spring is in the air. The newly upturned sod sends up an odor that God surely meant should be grateful to his senses; the sense of preparation, the look of restora-

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## A Tuft of Hepaticas

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tion, are delightful to his weary brain. If his dog welcomes him and his horse is in good condition, he feels himself far richer than he did yesterday, when he rushed from his office to his club. The uncovering of the strawberries and the asparagus is an event of importance; the violet frames are worth any Fifth Avenue florist's gorgeous display, the hotbeds are full of promise, and a brood of young chicks, irrespective of their strain, is full of charm. His chat with the gardener is of far more interest than the committee meeting of yesterday, and he grieves when the setting sun and train-time call him cityward.

But he loves spring best who has hibernated in some solitary hillside farm, with nothing but the daily routine of feeding his cattle, the arrival of the weekly newspaper, and the Saturday visit to the country store to vary a life in which the body ages from disuse and the mind grows dull from lack of contact with the world. To such a one the sight of the first bluebird perched on the top of the pump, where it has gone in search of a chilly drink, is a positive thrill of delight. Not long will

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it be before wholesome activity and work which is useful to his fellow-men will be within his reach, and the cattle, aimlessly chewing the scattered corn-stalks in the barn-yard, be cropping the young grass. A man like this may not, with spiritually enlightened eyes, watch with admiring wonder the ephemeral beauty of the woods, coloring as their life-blood stirs in their hearts, but he is apt to look long and happily over the scene that has been so wearily asleep, and to take off his hat that the wind may blow across his forehead. And his voice has a ring of good cheer as he returns to the house and calls out, "Mother, I seen a bluebird!" It always strikes me with a pleasant recognition of what the husband thinks his wife's highest title when he calls her "Mother."

While full of homesick thoughts of country sights and sounds, I yesterday passed through a small square, where a fountain was playing and the winter covering was removed from the bulbs. Two besotted men, more animal than human, sat watching the strong, green crowns pushing through the rich soil. Their

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## A Tuft of Hepaticas

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eyes seemed too dull to see, their swollen faces were without expression. Said one of them : " I 've been trying to count every one of them plants. This time o' year I come every morning to see how much they 've growed. I wish they 'd hurry up and bloom."

I looked at him in wonder, and found hope even for him, since the life-giving spirit of God's springtime had power to waken some joy in his heart.

### II

#### THE EVE OF THE EASTER FESTIVAL

LIFE, life, everywhere life is the token that Easter Even is here! The symbolic egg, the chrysalis, and the butterfly, the whole world of color and of blossom, enrich the gay windows of the shops. The cheerful crowd upon the streets, even though hurrying through a sharply cold atmosphere and, perchance, this year sprinkled with snow-flakes in place of April showers, are gay with flowers at buttonholes or as a breast-knot.

Even to those to whom Lent is a word without meaning and Holy Week chiefly noticeable as a dull time at the theatres, there comes a vigorous intimation that the great majority of persons are glad about something and that there is a stir of rejoicing in the air. To the dullest brain, or to him whose ideas of immortality are either only philosophic dreams akin to Plato's peradventures, or mere

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## The Eve of the Easter Festival

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dim, savage intuitions which bring thoughts of "happy hunting grounds" as the fate of a human soul more probable than annihilation, there is a quickening sense that the life of man means something more than a few brief years of anxious existence and an exit like the going out of a candle.

The perfect blossom from the husky bulb, the soft catkin pushing through its horny cerements, the peeping chick beside its broken shell, the fluttering rainbow wings of the emancipated butterfly say strange things to the least reflecting of the throng upon the street, and bring a sense of pleasure which he does not stop to define.

And in the midst of this joyous display and expressive material cheerfulness, the church makes ready to cry "laud and hosanna"; alleluias ring out with every word of highest praise that man can catch from all the spoken tongues of earth. They sing the risen Christ triumphant over death.

But in and out among the hurrying and gift-laden people in the street pass women with faces veiled with crape, and conspicuous

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in the gayly dressed congregation stand black-robed figures that seem like perpetual protestants against hope and happiness, amid the bright freshness of the typical costumes, flowery and bright, of those who do not mourn. They seem to gaze at the newly opened blossoms on the altars as if they knew not what they meant. Their hearts seem to be dead within them, and to have lost the power to be glad.

“There is no flock, however watched and tended,  
    But one dead lamb is there ;  
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,  
    But has one vacant chair.”

The bitterness is past our telling, the loneliness unspeakable, the loss not to be weighed in scales of man’s creation. Nor does time, which brings composure and builds up a resisting armor behind which expression can hide itself, do more than make the heart realize that submission to the inevitable is the only safeguard of a sane mind. The hourly, daily routine of duty and work is the conserving power which maintains the brain and body in healthful equipoise.

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Let us find some still place where we may speak of what the healing spirit of “the God of Patience and Consolation” brings to those who mourn. The “comfortable words” of the divine compassion are better heard where the world does not enter. Perhaps some one who sits with a trembling hand resting on the arm of a newly vacant chair, may care to listen to such natural and practical suggestions as have made a lonely life better worth living to others, her sisters, who also have been desolate through grief. That ample chair, so comfortable in its cushioned softness, where marks of use are sacred because made by hands now still and by a dear head which rested there after much wearing thought, shall act as reliquary of a saint and make a place of sanctuary for us.

When our beloveds go a little way, across the sea perhaps; when they are absent for a time, a year or two it may be, how do we speak of them; how do we feel towards what they loved and purposed? Do we drop their names from the general family speech; do we shut the light from the room they occupied;

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do we count it an evidence of love towards them to live a life against which they would vehemently protest, and abruptly put an end to what they fostered and enjoyed?

Why should the mightier loss, the absence, which for lack of fitter word we call eternal, cause us to do these things? If the life which has ended has been that of a bright child to whom a sunbeam was a playfellow and a dark day a misfortune, is it not rational and fitting that the light it loved, the cheerful things it enjoyed most, should be conserved in memory of its radiant life?

I knew a mother who had held close to her devoted heart a little child blind from his birth; when the beautiful sightless eyes closed in death, she dressed herself in white and kept tears from off her cheeks. In the great per-adventure which her soul held to be truth, it might be that her boy could see his mother; if happily this should be so, his spiritual eyes must see her looking lovely and lovable. His mother must look sweet to him. Faithful and faithless can surely see the beautiful reality of perfect love in this: let us live for

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## The Eve of the Easter Festival

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our dead such lives as would gladden them on either side the veil, and be, even as regards the little things of everyday existence (such as the clothes we wear, the smile with which we cheer our neighbor or our friend), as nearly as we may what would have pleased them best.

When the head and pillar of the house is removed from his place, and the wife's name is changed to that saddest title borne by woman, widow, the truest honor to his life is surely to let his law rule in the household he built up. If his has been a cordial, hospitable reign, glad to welcome stranger and friend, and his voice been of good cheer, let him still dwell under his own roof in the presence of these qualities. If his genial spirit, his cheering views of life's problems have lifted men out of "the slough of despond," and his laugh been like a prophylactic against foreboding fear, do not shut out his influence from his home, but let it be a monument to his lovable nature. So he desired it to be, so let it be! Downcast eyes and silence at his board, and closed doors, and neglect of festival observance were abhorrent to him; let her with whom he shared his rule

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see that his spirit and his will are present as long as she can order the methods by which his home is governed. Let it be her joyful pleasure to nurse and keep alive every trace of his personality, and be herself his memorial among men and to his children. Can grief be healed by subverting all the course of a good man's life, and darkening his home, and disregarding all the order of his noble endeavor?

There is a conquest over death, a possible triumph over its grim and destroying majesty, by the force of love so strong that it loses itself in the persons beloved, and does not need to see and hear and touch in order to live for them ; a love that orders its daily walk in noble calmness and outgiving goodwill to man ; that dwells in the sunshine and radiates warmth, because of its supreme devotion to the unseen life, and is in unison, so far as shadow can accompany light, with the measureless happiness it believes the departed to enjoy.

Amusement, study, travel, change cannot help the bereaved to smile, nor bring peace

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## The Eve of the Easter Festival

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out of tribulation ; they all begin and end in the self from which we would fain escape. We are not laboring to keep green a beautiful memory, nor to bless the world ; all these are to better our own condition, and will be as fruitless as self-prompted labors always are. The only power by which the awful vacuum can be filled is the active principle of a love so intense that it is, in itself, an evidence of something undying, and this love must make itself known in benefits to humanity. Let the widow, who has first made her home life beautiful by devotion, pass outward to where her sister women bear, not only grief, but want, and put her shoulder to the double burden. Nor let her dream it a small, or even to herself a profitless thing, to carry good cheer to the dreary, even if they dwell in the luxury which only adds to their sorrow by leaving them idle. The quickly transmitted spark of enkindling interest in life will warm her own heart, and there will invariably come a touch of joy which will be her part of the festival brightness.

To let our special form of grief carry us

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where in memory of the departed we become the strength of the weak or the good cheer of the forlorn in similar relation, is a wonderful transmutor of sorrowful experience. A childless mother, carrying in her baby's name maternal solicitude to motherless children, and expending her tenderness on those who have no one left to gladden their young lives, goes like one specially equipped and sent to relieve a grievous need. To soothe and help a little one crying for an absent mother cannot but make happy a woman whose arms are emptied by death.

The young girl, yearning for the touch of a mother's hand and the counsel of a mother's voice, will expand as a flower in the sunshine if to some aged woman, from whose home marriage and loss have carried away her daughters, she brings again a child's fond care and service. "In memory of" is easily carved on very stately monuments, on which wet eyes look hopelessly ; to make a human heart glad in remembrance of one unseen, but whom love cannot let die, is to turn bereavement into a conduit of refreshment by

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## The Eve of the Easter Festival

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which the lost-to-sight continue actively present with us day by day.

Losing some splendid vitally endowed young son, a parent's soul is only wrung with keener anguish while it shrinks away from boyish laughter, and dreads to hear of progressing manhood, and of goals attained towards which their lad had struggled. O ! rather keep every link bright ; let not a comrade fail to know that he has a place in your heart for the dead boy's sake ; let memories of his temptations guide you when and how to aid a stumbling foot ; let social warmth invite those he loved to continual companionship in the house to which he first drew them into intimacy ; keep him living in your heart and theirs —

“ But when the forest is full of ashes,  
While still the flame round the old nest flashes ;  
'T is a brave bird sits on a charred bough and sings.”

True, but it is only the “ brave bird ” who can keep her heart alive !

Easter, glad feast of life, belongs only to those who are alive in soul, and heart, and

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mind. Hearts buried in graves have but little share in its resurrecting thrill of joy. *Love which holds on*, which lives for its own, and makes each day a fruitful memorial instead of a measure of repining, has a foretaste of the immortality it believes in, through its conquest of death's power to destroy.

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## A Neglected Subject of Education

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### III

#### A NEGLECTED SUBJECT OF EDUCATION

**F**OR every conceivable avocation, profession, or even graceful accomplishment, youthful aspirants are schooled. They are taught to catch every "coigne of vantage," to avoid each possible chance of defeat and disaster; but when young girls and men approach the time when they may naturally expect and hope to marry, it is a rare thing to find for either sex that the slightest preparatory teaching has been attempted regarding those things which are to mar or make the joy or wretchedness of two human lives, bound with an irrevocable bond.

"It is not," said a wise woman to a daughter who was weighing a suitor in the balance, "whether you could be happy with this man, but whether you could be happy without him?" It was like an electric-light thrown upon a picture: life could be very tolerable

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to the young, joyous girl, even if her pleasant partner in many a merry dance was to fade out of sight.

Position, income, personal attractiveness, are also discussed, as débutantes and possible “eligible parties,” pass in the great processions of May Fair, but rarely does a mother out of the deep experiences of her own life show to her children that the marriage vow means self-abnegation, mutual patience which has no limit, suppression of temper, resistance of irritable influences, the adapting of individual habits, and the preference of mutual benefit. Seldom is a girl taught that she is responsible for a righteous use of her husband’s means, and that she is a partner of his labor. How many girls have been warned that to adorn themselves with dress and ornament, which become burdensome to their husbands’ purses, is a cruel wrong?

“Some day, in your own home, dear daughter, you will need to remember this,” ought to be an easily attractive preamble to a mother’s helpful words. And to her sons, surely every joy and every disappointment of

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## A Neglected Subject of Education

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her own life ought to furnish her a means of helping them not to enter "lightly or unadvisedly" into that vowed responsibility which is to control the happiness or misery of a woman's destiny.

The present heartbreaking frequency of separations and divorces cannot but make thinking men and women tremble for the steadfastness of those foundations upon which their children are building the walls of home. It seems easily possible that many of these broken vows and wrecked lives have met their fate because of the improper way in which they were originally united. These people have built for themselves dwellings un cemented by faithful purpose, and ceiled them with a covering of tinsel gauze.

In view of what is an inevitable and integral certainty of married life and responsibility, it would seem that it could not be hard for a mother to question her daughter whether while she encouraged the devotion of her suitor she realized that if she accepted him as her husband, it involved honor and obedience, and readiness to do the will of this man as

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his wife. Yet it seems that common custom causes mother and child to talk much of the material gain, of fair dwellings, and social enjoyment, and little of the words in that solemn sequence of promises, “for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness as well as in health, until death doth us part.” Do the parents of the belle of the season, gayly choosing from half-a-dozen wooers, ever ask : “ Will this one man’s love and admiration satisfy your hitherto fickle heart and you be able to ‘ cleave to him only ’ ? ”

Marriage seems to be regarded as a sort of open gate to more and more indulgence and gayety, and an indefinite promise of luxury. “ Can and will you be ready to suffer for and with this man ? ” never seems to be a query put by the lips of loving parents to a would-be bride.

Behind the scenes, with some old friend, and yet more frequently in confidential talks with her father, the mother is apt to say : “ I am very anxious about Annette, she has been so indulged and never had any responsibility ; I am afraid she will never be able to take life

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## A Neglected Subject of Education

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seriously." Why should it be a sealed subject between mother and daughter, that to be a good wife means a bended will and a tenderly considerate self-forgetfulness; to be a good mother means pain of body, unending faithfulness to absorbing duty, and the offering of mind, and soul, and heart on the altar of maternal devotion?

Who teaches the young girls of to-day that motherhood is the crown of a woman's life, and that its pains and self-denials are as nothing in the scale of its unutterable bliss and dignity?

What father tells his son, "If you are sure you love this girl, remember that you will have to yield all your previous habits to make her happy; she will not bear to have you put your profession first, you will have to curtail study, go into society with her, and provide the amusement which she has been dependent upon from her babyhood? Do not ask her to give herself into your keeping, until you have weighed her in the balance. Is she worth to you the alteration of every line in your past life?"

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Nine out of ten young people are fully convinced that the faults and peculiarities they see in their best beloved can easily be changed "after we are married." Why marry what must be altered to make you happy? This is a strange, yet ever present and active factor in the majority of marriages, and alas! the cause of many a broken hope, the misery of many a disappointed heart.

"The girl is so recklessly extravagant that I fear you can never meet her demands," says a friend. The lover smiles triumphantly: "Oh! she will give all that up as soon as we are married," is his confident reply.

Does it often happen that a father takes into his confidence, his boy, whom he sees steadily progressing toward an attachment which must end in matrimony, and lay bare to him what he must look forward to if he is to be a true head to a household, a loyal, helpful husband, a faithful, forbearing guide and provider to a dependent family? Rather will he in privacy bewail his child's imprudence and want of forethought, and look discouraged and annoyed when the young people about him jest

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## A Neglected Subject of Education

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over the visible growth of an amusing love affair, and never feel that his open and wise counsel might have steered these young lives into a safer channel.

Parents advise about health, business, travel, amusement, but on this most important, most awful crisis of life, they are reticent, they are often culpably silent. Of course, we every day know of downright and often unreasonable opposition which brings forth wrath and feud and every evil consequence, but helpful, considerate advice is a rare gift from a father to his son under these circumstances. There surely must be a way in which, man to man, a son and father, can, even if the elder is not of the same mind, be affectionately open with each other and the boy gain strength and wisdom as the result.

But there is an earlier influence possible, which is yet more rarely brought to bear. Surely this "new era" of light regard for marriage-bonds might be checked in its inroads upon the happiness of our generation, if at their own firesides children found that their parents dealt vigorously with the terrible

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intrusion of divorce cases into the common conversation of the family, and that a light or joking allusion to broken faith and wrecked homes was treated as a desecration.

If the ignominy of conjugal infidelity was shown in every tone and action with which the current gossip of the day was met in the family circle; if the girls learned at their mother's side that the faithfulness and love which bear and forgive, and uplift and endure, and adhere in darkness and through evil report give to women an empire out of which disgrace and dishonor fled in fear, they would take into their young hearts the realization that when they came to their own time of trial these were their legitimate weapons of defence. They would learn that it is a glorious thing to win back an erring or even a trifling heart to a true allegiance, and that to magnify a trifling difference into a dividing chasm is the work of the wholly unworthy women of the world.

A girl who has so learned from babyhood that the first duty of a woman is to guard and build up and repair the bulwarks of

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## A Neglected Subject of Education

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home, does not lightly quarrel or wantonly offend even a trying or an erring husband. And if from her earliest recollection she has been taught to despise the levity and extravagance and vanity which come between wives and their offended husbands, she is not likely to fall into the snares these evils set for her.

And from the mother to her sons may come those gentle unveilings of the nature of feminine hearts which shall help them to realize, before experience teaches, their mysterious, inexplicable fancies and desires. Here may they be taught to be tender of nervous fears, forgiving of the exactions made by a love so eager that it is never satisfied with less than all, gentle to the demands which are not meant to be selfish and extravagant, but arise simply from ignorance of values either of time or money.

She, too, can best teach how needful it is to ambitious and loving womanhood that it should be a helpmeet, a sharer of man's struggle. She can show her son that if he would raise his young wife to her highest

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## Home Thoughts

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attainable level, he must not put a veil between his trials and her co-operation, but let her meet them with him, learning courage as she goes onward.

In life's stern school we leave our children to learn bitter lessons suddenly and discern sad truths by the blows of misfortune, for which we might have armed them ere they entered, and many and many a time have spared them a hardening cruel experience, by pointing out the true defence against the coming danger.

We cannot raise too high a standard regarding marriage and its duties in our children's minds ; we cannot teach too ardently the blessedness of home, nor exalt too highly the triumphs of that love which is neither blind nor fickle, but strong enough to conquer death itself.

There might be a revolution which achieved for our threatened family life as great a victory as ever was won for liberty or other human right, if our weddings could mean the joining of lives which approached an indissoluble union, strong in the strength of minds pre-

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## A Neglected Subject of Education

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pared and hearts determined to bear and forbear, and conscious that marriage means that they are ready to meet sorrow and trial as freely for love's sake, as to drink its brimming cup of joy.

### IV

#### MY SON'S WIFE AND MY DAUGHTER'S HUSBAND

**W**HEN the wedding procession comes down the aisle, and the bride advances — either, after the end-of-the-century fashion, gayly looking about and dispensing smiles, or, after the gentler, elder usage, passing nervously under the fire of critical eyes, with strong traces of awe and emotion on her young face — habit has long made me lose sight of this central figure of attraction, while I look for the mother, and try to learn what she is thinking.

Once started on this interesting study, there is little doubt but that you will pursue it, and it is a curiously varied and an unusually easy way to read a chapter of human experience and feeling. The least attractive type is the elated and satisfied matron, full of the “success” of the match, the splendor of the display, the notoriety of the whole affair.

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## Son's Wife and Daughter's Husband

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The richness of her own gown, the costliness of the bride's, the well-known names of the maids and ushers, are filling her with pride, and she is material satisfaction incarnate. Then there is a pathetic type, never failing to touch the heart of her sister-women, the widowed mother, who trembles lest, lacking a father, her child has decided unwisely, and to whom the marriage means another vacant place. But the most beautiful phase of this many-sided exhibition of motherhood comes in the loving large-hearted woman, in whose whole carriage and expression one discovers overflowing sympathy with her child's happiness, tender belief that she is the loveliest of brides, which brings that fascinating, transparent look of pride into her moist eyes, and yet allows one to read about the trembling lips realization of what it means to have heard her take that marriage vow, which covers such unutterable possibilities, such certain assurance of sorrows shared and trials undergone.

There is a solemnity in the marriage service which makes the gaping crowd and restless

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## Home Thoughts

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effort to see, and the whispered comments in a fashionable assembly, exceedingly out of place. After the chimes have clamored their congratulation, and sunlight and open air relieve the nervous tension, or when at the home, social hilarity and indispensable congratulation scatter doubts and leave only room for the joyous hope that all your good wishes will be more than fulfilled, weddings become mirthful and full of rejoicing; but while the ceremony is in progress, the irrevo-cableness is appalling to one who thinks and knows what life means, and the possibilities seem to rise and fill the space above the bowed heads, like the vast, mysterious incense-cloud which escaped from the lamp of the genie.

For the woman bent on insuring what is technically meant as a "good match" for her son or daughter, even the careless world feels no sympathy, whatever she may reap as a harvest besides the wealth and social eminence which she sought. If after a time her child is as conspicuous for unhappiness or bad behavior as at the beginning for luxury and

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## Son's Wife and Daughter's Husband

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power, no one grieves for her who sought and assisted to make the union. It is for the mother who, having unselfishly given up her child, sees mistakes she cannot remedy, and troubles she cannot avert, arising constantly, and entangling the young feet, that one sighs in sympathy.

No other relation demands such total suppression of self, and makes such large claim on sound judgment, and surely none compares with it in requirement of such justice as we only expect to find complete in divinity. If it is but the wholly, the blessedly natural desire of the married lovers to live for each other, and to resent intrusion into their new world, where they are learning each other's characters by the light of affection and mutual experience, it is a sharp trial for a mother to find herself *de trop*, where she has been indispensable. Let it be no more than some petty whim of taste which causes the daughter to discard a favorite dress of the mother's choosing, because her husband does not think it becoming; let it be only the sharper cut of seeing the son cheerfully abandoning some

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## Home Thoughts

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hitherto immovable habit, with the unconcerned ease of a mere nothing, it impinges on the very citadel of the mother-heart, and wears its furrow there. Mayhap it is the cigarette, which he has been unceasingly besought to abandon for year after year unavailingly ; to-day he says, as if it were the merest trifle : "Oh, I gave those up as soon as I was married ; my wife made quite a point of it." Magnanimous mother indeed is she who can say without an inward twinge of jealousy or influence, " How glad I am."

In the ordering of the household, in the choosing of friends, in the management of children, how difficult is it to avoid active intermeddling, how almost impossible not to resent the rejection of advice ! The swift revolution of opinion in all things seems to find the very hub of its progress in the ruling of domestic life, and the regimen and discipline in the parents' nursery, from which the young father and mother have emerged well-developed, well-mannered men and women, has been replaced by ideas based on wholly subversive laws ; many a grandmother is as much

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## Son's Wife and Daughter's Husband

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at a loss in a place ruled by a modern trained nurse as if her progeny had been lambs and her daughters were young lions.

It is said that every "soul must work out its own salvation," and surely it is true that every man and wife must hew out their own pathway through life's tangle, and be a law unto themselves. No woman, however wise and forbearing, however tender and self-effacing, can rule another woman's household and family, nor can she judge altogether justly even for her own child. To hold one's peace is as hard as for a sailor to see a ship drifting landward in a storm and not to take the helm ; but blessed is she who, while keeping loving watch, does not fan a slight disturbing breeze into a tempest by interference.

Surprised to see that the foundation for a new building was being laid where a garden had beautified the ample house in which a widowed mother and a son had lived, I asked the owner how she could give up her flowers. "My son is soon to be married," she said ; "the new house is for him and his bride." "But why not have them live with you ?"

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## Home Thoughts

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“Oh, I love them far too much for that,” was her clever reply, which made us both laugh, though the deep-rooted wisdom and large unselfishness were patent enough in its few words.

Often the silent readiness of a mother-in-law is rewarded by the confidential application for advice from an observant son-in-law, which means more than many protestations of affection, and what she then advises is almost sure of both a respectful hearing and a faithful following. The tie thus made is generally enduring and mutually honored in every way. Indeed, I have seen the wise and unselfish mother-in-law entirely supplant the selfish, repining, irritating natural mother who never ceased to meet her son with upbraiding for his rare visits and lack of interest in her and her many imaginary ailments.

A long-married and happy wife once said in my hearing that she had never had any “law relations,” but that her husband’s people were wholly to her as her own. Yet the mother-in-law in this case was a woman of masterful will and vigorous intellect, who

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## Son's Wife and Daughter's Husband

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ruled with no uncertain authority in her own kingdom. Her sons' wives, however, never remembered a word either of direction or correction to them or to their children. When worry or anxiety evoked a need of advice, they naturally turned to her wisdom and experience, and when they yearned for comfort there was no better place to find it than within the clasp of her strong, helpful arms.

One bond between this extraordinary woman and her daughters-in-law lay in her extreme reticence concerning their affairs. I doubt if she ever broke her golden rule of silence; she never discussed the affairs or failings of one child with the other or gossiped over them to her friends. They were sacred personalities to her, and what she saw and felt she "kept in the deep of her own heart." She was repaid with large interest of trustful affection and admiration, and the marriages of her sons drew them towards her instead of weakening her influence. She asked so little that they could hardly give enough, and her daughters-in-law, disarmed of any fears for

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## Home Thoughts

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their own supremacy, voluntarily asked her to guide them from her deep experience.

The strange contrariety of human choice makes a deeply sore point over which maternal love has to pass daily and hourly when it sees son or daughter deliberately choosing for a life-mate a nature in which flaws and incurable imperfections are plain to all but the lover's eyes. Sad forebodings possess the mother's heart as she ponders over a selfish girl, loved for the beauty which must soon go ; or an earth-bound cold woman who has charmed by a flippant wit which argues a sometime shrewish temper; or sees her daughter place her life in the keeping of one in whom she can never find help in time of need, or readily promise herself to a man in whom self reigns supreme.

Yet if the impelling force of attraction becomes irresistible, and the decision is deliberate, nothing but sin ought to make opposition even reasonable. Only the heart of a man or a woman knows its own necessities ; no one can determine for them that which is the outgrowth of their natures. When, with

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## Son's Wife and Daughter's Husband

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a reluctance which is a pain too deep to have yet found a name, a mother has to welcome daughters and sons so chosen, she can only hope to play her hard rôle by making her law that love which “seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil,” “but suffereth long and is kind.” Of all “home thoughts,” there seems no ground for deeper or more urgent consideration than these relations call forth.

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## Home Thoughts

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### V

#### A F T E R   T H E   W E D D I N G

“Thus it is our daughters leave us,  
Those we love and those who love us !  
Just when they have learned to help us,  
When we are old and lean upon them,  
Comes a youth with flaunting feathers,  
With his flute of reeds, a stranger,  
Wanders piping through the village,  
Beckons to the fairest maiden,  
And she follows where he leads her,  
Leaving all things for the stranger.”

THE same old human story lives itself out whether its actors be of savage or of gentle race ; it matters not whether it be the ancient arrow-maker “left standing lonely at the door of his wigwam,” or the citizen of great renown, who turns back into his too splendid but for ever poorer house, or the sturdy laborer who sees his little girl go gayly off clinging to the arm of her sweetheart, the heart cries out : “She has left me for a stranger.”

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## After the Wedding

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We may summon philosophy, and common sense, and reasonable judgment — nay, even have a strong desire to see our children make new homes and gather about them fresh affections which shall comfort and sustain when we are gone — yet a father and mother are indeed bereft when tender daughter and stalwart son make irrevocable vows to cleave only unto the choice of their hearts and close the door of home behind them.

The void is emphasized, when it is a daughter who leaves us, by the immense importance which surrounds a bride. She was simply a dear, sweet girl until she named her wedding-day, and became the pivot on which all material things depend for adjustment and the centre of the family emotion. Even the younger children and the servants are eager to share in the common devotion, and from the tying of her shoe-string to the glitter of her costliest wedding gift, nothing is of any comparative interest in the household.

For months of preparation the needs and purposes of other members of the family are put into the background. While renovators

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## Home Thoughts

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adorn and refresh the house, dressmakers absorb the time of mother and daughter. Every item of wardrobe and household plenishing is of supreme value in their thoughts and in their conversation.

The tide of excitement grows stronger and deeper, day by day, until at last, be the household of what status it may, on the eve of the wedding, there is literally no other thing thought of but the event and its central white-robed figure.

When she turns from her mirror, veiled, blossom-crowned, ready to depart, and her father seats her beside him, he has to gather courage while the carriage rolls forward to the church, remembering that these are his last moments of possession, realizing that all this loveliness will presently, by his own act, be given to the keeping of another. He remembers the mistakes, the errors of judgment, the untrained selfishness of his own youth, and he knows the man she loves is human like himself; it is not an easy part he has to play in this life-drama. The dénouement may not come until he has slept with his fathers; he

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## After the Wedding

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may never know what its final scene will be ; he is only certain that he is setting in motion the whole possible action, with its measureless result, by his own word and consent.

Far better for the world, for the brightness of youth, for the courage of trusting love that the phenomena of hope and trust are eternal ; no previous evidence of marital sorrow or grave responsibility affects the certain confidence of the lover and his lass. In old days the bride's eyes were downcast and her cheeks pale, and her newly ringed hand trembled on her husband's arm. To-day the just-made wife walks in radiant triumph down the long aisle, brilliant and not abashed ; but in the hearts of either generation there is the same steadfast belief that for them no darkness lurks in the unknown future.

When Hiawatha made that happy wedding journey, in which all nature gave him sympathy and congratulation, the sun counselled him to rule by love and the moon whispered to the joyous bride : " Rule by patience, Laughing Water." Little thought the triumphant lover of heeding the wise precepts of the all-seeing

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## Home Thoughts

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sun; small heed did the handsomest woman in the land of the Dacotahs pay to the admonition of the gentle moon. He who forded the swift river, holding his fair wife high in his strong arms, as a trophy of his prowess, felt no fear that love should grow cool within his lodge; she who clung to him had little dread that a time would come when she must endure and be silent. Here in city streets, fathers and mothers long to talk of love's dangers in the fiery trials of the world's stress and storm, and to cry from out experienced hearts to their children to be true and forbearing. But what chance have they to speak of hidden perils to those who count the world well lost if they be left together, and who cannot link such an ominous word as patience with a joy like theirs?

These thoughts press home on the parents' hearts as they stand in their deserted house after the door has closed upon the last wedding guest. Was there ever such an anti-climax as that hour brings forth? Confusion, disorder, faded flowers, broken wreaths, emptiness! Even the seats where the musicians

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## After the Wedding

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sat so short a time ago express the end of it all ! A curious aspect of desertion, of something lost and never to be found, attaches itself even to inanimate things. The marriage-bell, so suggestive and beautiful when it hung above the bride's fair head, now looks out of place and meaningless, and the depression of the household is in exact proportion to the long-gathering excitement which had gone before.

A tender and beautiful sequence not infrequently follows the wedding of their child in the renewed love of the father and mother. If their lives have been fond and faithful, they live over again their own days of courtship and grow reminiscent of their early married life. Unused to see much demonstration of affection in their parents' quiet manners, the children are surprised to see them draw apart and talk together privately. Their yearning hearts take counsel from fond memories, and from experience they strive to forecast the future for their fledgling; without much speech concerning the present, they comfort one another.

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## Home Thoughts

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I can recall two dear old people peculiarly reserved in the matter of caresses or endearing forms of speech, who, after the marriage of two sons, were seen walking together in their garden in a June twilight in most lover-like absorption. “Father and mother are having a little honeymoon of their own,” said the younger children, and they were right. The hard grip of a sternly disciplined life and the struggle of brave hearts with adversity had checked expression ; these weddings of young hearts, all aglow with ardent hope, had revivified their own old dreams, and over the vacant places in their homes they laid the lovely veil of an assurance that life is indeed worth living where affection grows with the passing years and keeps the heart warm at its core.

Where doubt lurks in a father’s heart, either as to the character of the man his daughter has married or of his motives in wooing her, his pain must be sharp, indeed ! The knell-like sound of those few but fatal words which bind a man and woman together until death shall part them must be far more sorrowful, more heart-breaking, than the toll

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## After the Wedding

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of funeral bells. We may hold whichever side we choose of the indissoluble or frangible nature of the marriage tie, but deep down in the hidden heart men and women know that whatever the law may do to free them from each other, those lives can never fail to act and react upon each other so long as they both do live. To see children die is surely easier than to see them marry under influences which promise heart-break and misery.

As we watch the whole beautiful pageant of a wedding, how seldom do we take heed of the probable self-abnegation which makes this new departure, this creation of a new home, possible! It is rarely a blessed union which is not sealed by the tender love-sacrifice of one or other parent's heart. None but the most selfish mother or father would hesitate to throw all the weight of their approval, all the aid of their assistance, into the scale in which the satisfying of their child's heart hung in the balance; but it is mother-nature to crave the first place in her boy's love, and it is a big wrench which looses the father's hold on his pet girl.

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## Home Thoughts

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The old phrase “seeing our children settled in life” has a deep meaning in its plain words. We would, indeed, see them take root in some more sustaining soil than our fading, failing lives afford to their future; we would not leave our sons without the safeguard of a home, a place where love both gives shelter and invokes a man’s best endeavor; we would not leave our girls without a strong arm between them and the onslaught of the world’s hard blows. Yes, we long to see them gathering about them the encircling warmth of family life and ties; yet when the boughs are lopped, the strong life-sap of the parent tree drops from the dismembering cut, and it is a vigorous trunk which heals the place and hides the scar with spicy covering.

Always the same gate of relief lies open to human pain; the door of self-forgetfulness! As the old home grows vacant the new one will increase in life and glow with ever-growing warmth; as the old home hushes to stillness, children’s voices will laugh and echo in the chambers of the new. The heart must

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## After the Wedding

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expand and take in the new life and its loves and live in them. "Forward and not back, out and not in, up and not down," dear fathers and mothers, and a health to the bride!

### VI

#### LIVING UP TO THE WEDDING PRESENTS

**T**WO thoughtful women recently talking together of the influences gaining ground in our day, waxed eloquent over the embarrassment of such riches as were showered on our most modest brides. "I do not know when I have so realized the oppressive weight of material things as while I was a guest, just before a wedding, in an already overladen home. The piling up of innumerable unnecessary gifts became a sort of nightmare. Even the bride began to lose interest on the arrival of the twenty-seventh silver candlestick! What would she do with them all? Who would take care of them? I sighed for freedom of choice and space and the dear individualism in the home furnishing of 'earlier years.'"

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## Living up to the Wedding Presents

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Though no frankly feminine heart can be indifferent to these tokens of honor to the bride, or of affection to the woman, and no woman alive indifferent to the accession of exquisite belongings, yet it is certainly a very difficult matter to know how a man of moderate, or more often very small income, shall begin life with silver fit for the table of a princess, and china and glass of the greatest value only fitted for the use of a splendid household. One instance of plates at two hundred dollars a dozen going to the home of a young couple whose united incomes did not reach twenty-five hundred, points the moral to my tale.

Chest after chest of magnificent silver rests in Tiffany's vaults, or in the strong rooms of "safe deposit" companies, while the owners live in small apartments, in an economical fashion, which would render the use of their treasures impossible.

There is very serious difficulty in the adjustment of life to this beginning. If you are in possession of exceedingly beautiful and valuable things, it is certainly very trying to put

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them aside, out of sight or use. It seems absolutely ridiculous, when your purse is not overflowing, and you have a sensible remembrance of the surely coming day of emergency and unexpected expense, to set aside what is already yours without any cost and buy plainer things in their stead.

From this perplexing position there is ordinarily but one outcome, a compromise which is far from satisfactory in any way. The outlay for furnishing is made more than is quite right; the sideboard must have some proportionate richness to the silver displayed upon it; the rare china must have a cabinet to hold it. The whole plan has the blight of imprudence to damp the joy of the first purchasing for the future home.

Nothing is too lovely for the sweet young bride, nothing too precious to give to the daughter or son of an old friend. Yet if one seriously took it in hand to think of what the first steps toward home-building would naturally be, what the groom's probable income would warrant, it seems as if a more rational outcome would result, and the young couple

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## Living up to the Wedding Presents

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be more truly helped, while we should have bestowed not only as much thought but as truly valuable gifts upon them.

Books, for one thing, are very rare items in a list of wedding-gifts. Yet to have a small, well-chosen library as one of the foundations of a new home would certainly be a very sure basis for enjoyment, and of added dignity and character to the room they adorned. A little co-operation among relatives could readily give permanently useful and decorative book-cases, and fill the shelves with friends who cannot change, but remain undying companions along life's journey.

Pictures, too, are very unusual gifts. If the hundreds of dollars invested in china and glass, which by one awkward, careless motion of an unskilled maid will be swept out of existence, were invested in some beautiful canvas or ever-fascinating water-color drawing, the giver would provide a pleasure which could not pall, an educational influence that could not be over-estimated, and the most beautiful of plenishings to the new home.

With rich and very near friends and rela-

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## Home Thoughts

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tives, the gift of a check which would permit the young householders to choose something at once appropriate and attractive would seem, in the end, the more acceptable and helpful gift. There seems to be something sordid and mercantile in the giving and taking of money. The delicate compliment conveyed in the choice of a gift which indicates that the donor believed that you understood and valued beauty and quality, is very dear to one's self-esteem. There is a suggestion of tenderness in a personal ornament, and of prophecy of coming success in the world in a gorgeous silver bowl resplendent with rich repoussé work. But if the potent bit of thin paper or the lordly gold eagles come with a loving wish, and the balance of favor hangs between a silver-framed mirror and a check wherewith to buy a piano for the young people starting out on a narrow income, it seems as if the scale would quickly show that the choice was a very easily decided one.

The comparative value of an elaborately expensive clock or a well-supplied kitchen would not long be in debate when the bride

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## Living up to the Wedding Presents

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stood looking at her empty closets and dresser, and knew of no place where the clock would not look as if it were lost, strayed, or stolen. Those homely pots and pans, those black and unsightly cooking utensils, those innumerable "must haves" of the unseen corner-stone of domestic comfort, cost so much ; the price of all that ormolu and Viennese gilding so unsuited to her little parlor would just have made everything so perfect in this unprovided department.

Of course in these days of abundant wealth the majority of brides among people "in society" are fortunate enough to have homes made ready for them ; like the lilies of the Scripture, they "toil not" to build for themselves their niche in life's temple. But those to whom that blessed middle path between poverty and wealth is allotted have more than compensation for their smaller heritage. If there is a purely unadulterated delight in this world it is in the commencing and expanding of a home, dependent on the energy and industry of its young master, and the skill and wisdom of his wife.

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## Home Thoughts

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They lose an untold happiness who do not know the slow accession of desired things; the filling of the blank space with the house-wife's very heart's desire, either through her own unsuspected economies, or the generous provision made possible by a husband's success. A little reflected thrill of long past delightful surprises comes to my mind as I write. May many a young wife of this year know these inexpressibly charming experiences, in which some long remembered wish, spoken half in jest, unexpectedly takes form through affectionate determination that she shall see her desire gratified. May many a hard-working young husband reap his reward for personal self-denial and effort, in that satisfying exclamation of happy astonishment which greets his unlooked-for addition to the household treasures.

Magnificent furnishings for a table entail, by subtle necessity, a corresponding luxury in the viands placed upon it. Silver dishes are incongruous with a frugal meal; six-light candelabra are provocative of mirth when they illuminate a dish of English chops! It is

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## Living up to the Wedding Presents

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sometimes very difficult to live up to our belongings.

Judgment, taste, and that crowning virtue in a housewife, common sense, can accomplish marvels. It is sheer cowardice to buy what you cannot afford in order to live up to your wedding presents. Beauty nowadays is so inherent in comparatively inexpensive things, that patience can find a meeting-place for its simple forms of expression with those which have been worked out in more costly ways. Simplicity is always dignified and needs no covering veil of pretence. Gradually, as fortune smiles and the dimension of the roof grows under its benediction, all these things will find their fitting place and use; do not try to be what you are not, but bide your time. No part of the journey will be pleasanter than these early days of mutual endeavor. The evening meal will not gain relish by the addition of a chef to your kitchen; the skilled touch of England's best butler will not give the grace to your centre-piece that your own dainty fingers imparted. When the gleam of the silver gives splendor to your

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## Home Thoughts

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table, then, fitted to receive its burden, you will perhaps look back with regret to simpler surroundings.

It is a good thing for a man and his wife to grow rich with their increasing age and responsibilities. Wait the leisure and the harvest of the years, and now only take it in task to provide things “honest in the sight of all men.”

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## The Lady of the House

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### VII

#### THE LADY OF THE HOUSE

STEPPING over soiled envelopes thrust under the door, or besieged by dirty petitions from fraudulent beggars, addressed to the "Lady of the House," we laugh over the impersonal nature of a universally applicable circular and are seldom otherwise reminded of the beautiful significance of a title dropped by modern usage. It is good to remember that this appellation means a very lovely thing, and something widely different from living in splendor and wearing gorgeous raiment.

"This beneficent and legal dominion of the Domina or House-Lady is great and venerable," and is something to aspire to. With its utterance visions arise of what such a one ought to be. An effort has been made to find a derivation which would make it infer benevolence, "a divider of bread," but the more learned philologists claim for its origin

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## Home Thoughts

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the feminine of the old Anglo-Saxon word for lord, and surely it means to us one who rules home and herself after the codes of highest human development. It lifts the mistress into the higher realm, where courtesy and decorum and refining gentleness reign paramount, and the uplifting law of love is administered to the defeat of all rancor and strife.

It means also a responsibility, the forgetfulness of which forfeits the title. She cannot truly be worthy to be called "Domina" who lays down her sceptre and lets hirelings rule in her stead. The draperies may hang in all due order, the silver may gleam upon the board, the viands may be pre-eminently excellent through the skilled service of men and women of lower order, but the atmosphere which makes the home pure, restful, inspiring, and wholly beautiful cannot be created by any one without the training of a Christian gentlewoman and the education which has come from higher sources than text-books.

"It is little to say of a woman that she does not destroy as she passes. She should

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## The Lady of the House

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revive." From the Lady of the House should come the refreshment of all the dwellers under her roof. When she gives her orders for the programme of the day, the hot and weary cook should feel that an invigorating, inspiring influence has passed over her, after the brief visit which brought a figure of delicate daintiness to sit in the hastily dusted chair, and a kindly and commanding voice changed the drudgery of cooking into a pleasant duty by which the weak were to be made strong, the children to be pleased by wholesome "goodies," and the purse of the master kept from waste and robbery. And by ascending steps each in turn should find in this guiding genius of the small realm a place of rest and refuge, up to the master, whose only solace for life's care is found at her side.

Through her comes the order which makes the mere necessary eating and drinking a grace and pleasure; through her the ribald word is held in check, the unfair judgment reproved, the voice of scandal hushed. The poor emigrant girl, who, motherless and thrown on her own resources, seeks her bread

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## Home Thoughts

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in the service of the household, feels the restraint of a steady, instructed teacher of its economics, and finds a friend in the light of whose example and the strength of whose counsel she is kept from folly.

The woman who makes her morning a time of mere slatternly gathering up of the disordered fragments of yesterday can never hope to hold the reins which guide the domestic forces into "the realms of upper day." The fair serenity of a cheerful face and the sweet freshness of a well-chosen breakfast dress are like the rising of an indoor sun to those who gather about the family table for their morning meal. The school-boy orders his boisterous tone to respond to her thoughtful questioning; he feels conscious of his personal untidiness or the careless gathering of books and papers; he realizes the latent barbarism in his strong young life, and feels that influence which, until he develops the unique allegiance of a lover, makes him bow to the lady of his love, his mother. The door does not slam, the hands are cared for, the body is clean to the standard of a gentleman's cleanliness.

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## The Lady of the House

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ness, and he is tamed by the presence of the lady whom he honors as much as by the parent he obeys. There is scarcely a surer way of lifting the standard of family life up to the rule of true refinement than by guarding the morning meeting from disorder and discord, and inviting both beauty of service and gentle good order to preside over the breakfast-table.

In old tourneys, knights could not meet for honor's sake alone, unless they bore the favor of a fair lady; it was not possible, according to knightly faith, that a man should do his best in any feat of arms without a name and face to conjure by, which were for him the noblest and the fairest in the world. In life's harder tussles, in the grim and sordid fight for bread and recognition in the world's fierce battle for supremacy, the old chivalric idea holds true to-day, though we see no token worn outwardly over men's hearts or pinned upon their sleeves.

“But thou that hast no lady canst not fight”

means more to-day than it did in Arthur's time. He that lacks the inspiration for en-

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## Home Thoughts

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deavor given by the tender sharer of his life ; he who hears only of more money, more luxury, more adornment from the wife for whom he toils, or being single, knows no loftier cause for effort than his own aggrandizement, is terribly handicapped. He who is sent forth from an atmosphere calmed by the gentle sway of the serene "Domina" who lives to exercise her healing charm, enters office or workshop of any sort where toil awaits him, blessed with a strength to do his best ; he who knows that the eyes that gave a silent benediction as he closed the door would welcome him with tenfold joy if he came back an honorable hero, is never tempted to lose her respect by too keen a reaching after wealth. He knows that were his home a hut and his sustenance a crust, the lady of his home would make the one beautiful and the other enough to suffice.

To deserve truly the name, this ruler must see to it that the poor know her to be their friend ; that the dishonest and unjust do not rob or defraud her ; that everything is beautiful after its kind. If her dress be of cotton-

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## The Lady of the House

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print, it must be fair in color, spotless and uncreased, and fit to be adorned with a rose, if she should choose to wear one. No need for velvets and satins to bedeck, or a many-roomed dwelling to enthrone, the lady who makes everything elegant by her own informing touch. I have in my remembrance one who outrivaled every other whom I ever knew, but whose frugal simplicity would alarm most of our workingmen's wives to-day, and whose "high breeding" hid endeavor so effectually that it was never seen.

With a mixture of chagrin and surprise, on turning to "*Sesame and Lilies*" to verify a quotation, I find that all that I have written is but a weak paraphrase of Ruskin's faultless essay. I have not even read it for twenty years, and it recalls the eager, far-away first reading, and the thirsty drinking-in of his inspiring counsel. It had "rooted and grounded" itself so deeply that I had forgotten its tenacious growth; transplanted into soil that welcomed it, it seemed to be indigenous.

I leave it, the borrowed and the original, as it stands. The girls and women of to-day

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## Home Thoughts

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do not read Ruskin, as we, his contemporaries, did. They know little of the man who set women thinking what to do with their lives ; who bade them remember with awe what they could do with the magic of a fair face ; he who called men to recognize the brotherhood of man, and to reverence toil ; who demanded with the strenuous force of a prophet and a seer that no one should eat the bread of idleness, is not known among us to-day, except when some faint echo reaches us of the thunder tones he sent pealing through the world of his young day.

What he did best was to speak to the youth of both sexes as never other man of his race and generation spake, as to their gifts and their responsibility. How many men born since 1870 know of that extraordinary address to the young soldiers at Woolwich which he called “ War ” ? How many have read the “ Mystery of Life and its Arts ” ?

How many young women making ready to marry and rule their households have learned from him that “ a woman’s power is for rule not for battle ” — that “ her intellect is for

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## The Lady of the House

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sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision" — that "the true nature of a home is a place of peace" — that "marriage, when it is marriage at all, is only the seal which marks the vowed transition of temporary into untiring service, and of fitful into eternal love"?

What a white light these suggestive thoughts throw before the entering bride as she steps over the threshold of her new home to become the centre of its order, the source of its good or evil influences. How small do the furnishings appear in her eyes, who lifts her glance to the possible measure of good she may attain, and trembles lest she falls short! With what pride does she strengthen her faith in the boundless possibilities of her endeavor; with what humility does she feel the ease with which she may fail?

The old year has fled, and in the first days of the new year, how merrily the wedding bells have rung their chimes. In what we call "society," it is said that 189— was the "year of weddings." Will any bride write over her door: "Where a true wife comes, there home is always around her"?

### VIII

#### THE HOMELESSNESS OF CERTAIN MARRIED WOMEN

O PPORTUNITY has come to me of late to meet an unusual number of homeless young married people. They have good though moderate incomes, they are clever, in excellent health, active, energetic young men and women, and yet they have elected to live in boarding-houses and hotels. Elevators carry them to upper stories of huge caravansaries, where they take possession of a bed-room, a parlor, and a dressing-room. Here they add to the rich but unmistakably "hotel furniture" the pretty trifles, easily transported, which were among their wedding-presents, and they declare themselves content. They partake of meals, always rich and indigestible, and often of doubtful origin, ordered from long bills of fare, cooked by foreigners, and sit at little tables observing and being observed with

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## Homelessness of Married Women

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that long critical stare which is learned only in such surroundings.

The wife has no duties ; nothing in their lives exercises her skill, her brain power, or her ingenuity. Her husband receives no help or delight from the labor of her hands, or as the result of her good judgment. Half of her endowments are lying dormant, and almost every power she has is dulled from want of use. After her husband leaves her for his office, she has to think out some occupation for the day. She shops and visits ; if she is musical, she practises a little ; if she is bookish, she goes, perhaps, to a literary class or a lecture. Nothing taxes her resources ; no one is helped or benefited by her wise rule. Lacking that great prop and staff, personal responsibility, she has no taste of the joy of personal achievement and success. There is no way in which either husband or wife can express themselves in the material things by which they are surrounded. These furnished rooms are to their personal characteristics like ready-made clothing to their bodies, and betray in one way and another that they are “ misfits.”

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## Home Thoughts

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Worse still, to my thinking, is life in smaller boarding-houses, where the independence and isolation possible in large hotels is lost, and the elements of criticism and gossip find such congenial soil in which to lodge their fast-growing seeds.

I know no sadder words than homeless and childless! There is a mournful inflection in their very sounds, and yet these prettily dressed, eager, restless young women are both these sorrowful things. If God has denied them the crown of motherhood, it would be better to take some motherless baby to their hearts than to live all their lives without the guiding hand of a little child in theirs, and the clasp of little loving arms about their necks. I say guiding, with very sincere faith that there is no such attraction towards a noble life as the dependence and love of childhood, nor any such rebuke as the surprise or fear in a child's innocent eyes.

What causes a deliberate choice of this narrow life which entails so many deprivations is incomprehensible to me. The semblance of great luxury is certainly to be found in the

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## Homelessness of Married Women

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mirrors, the gilding, the deep-piled velvet carpets ; but does all this expensive show give any pleasure when it loses all personal interest, and stretching this way and that can sometimes be measured by miles ? To walk five hundred feet down the long corridors between doors which seem countless in number, and opening right and left to liberate strangers who pass you as if you were to be avoided as carefully as if you had the smallpox, cannot be a pleasure. To open your door and see five or six conventional pieces of furniture standing about at precisely the same angles as in every other room you have passed, so that if you did not chance to know that your legitimate number of square feet were known as number 499, you might readily think you were in your own quarters until you saw that where your walls were blue, your neighbor's were pink, cannot be encouraging to the sense of individual possession, which is half of life's joy.

The mere abiding under the same roof with people you dislike or despise, is trying, but when you believe that on your right hand

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## Home Thoughts

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is drunkenness, and on your left the elements of some great human tragedy ; to doubt the decency of your nearest neighbor at dinner, and be shocked at the vulgar display of the women you meet in the elevator, does not conduce to love of mankind or the elevation of your own thoughts.

In the narrower circle of the boarding-house, to detect in yourself an intense curiosity as to whether Mr. Blank is kind to his wife, or Mrs. Jones does not dress beyond her means, and be mortally ashamed of your impertinence, does not increase your self-respect.

Why choose these ways of living when open to every woman, according to her means, lies the door of a home ? A place which is for the time at least your very own, to be a source of comfort and peace to your husband and of joy to yourself just in proportion to your endeavors ? A place where color, arrangement, every adornment, every detail, from the delicate draperies at the windows to the well-chosen implements in the kitchen, expresses your tastes, your judgment, your

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## Homelessness of Married Women

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judicious economies, your thought of others, your love for your husband. Where no one enters but at your bidding, and then comes to be made happy by your society, or refreshed by your hospitality. Where, when the day is done, you realize that, from the flavor of the breakfast cup of coffee and the lightness of the rolls, to the restful chair in which he smoked his last cigar at night, the man you love best of all human beings owes every enjoyment to your oversight and plans.

No matter how small it may be, no matter how many difficulties of arrangement and adaptation present themselves, these, like all obstacles, only enhance success, and in these days of apartments and moderate houses built especially to tempt young housekeepers, no one who can afford to live as I have described can be too restricted in their means to find it hard to select from one of these classes of domiciles what is suitable and pleasant. And having chosen, can there be many pleasures more sure and satisfying than making of those vacant rooms and bare walls a home? That vital spark of vanity and self-satisfaction with-

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out which no woman's life is really delightful, that undefinable, unclassified quality which makes her look at her completed work with the exhilarating belief that few could excel it, here has full play. Here she can be original, ingenious, surprising, and all this to the fulfilment of the chief end of her hopes and the expression of her highest desire.

The birds find sources of exultation in the building of their nests, and you can discover that they are house-furnishing by the joy of their songs. It is the natural instinct of love and life to make a place to dwell in. To the woman who can devise a fastidiously beautiful gown, I would commend the arrangement and decoration of a room as the expansion and tenfold higher use of her art. To the woman who would endear herself to her husband, I would offer to guarantee that if she can keep within the limit of his means and yet make for him a lovely, comfortable, appropriate abiding place, in which he has room for the development of his own tastes and opportunity to bring about him his friends in hospitable fashion, she will have endeared herself inex-

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## Homelessness of Married Women

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pressibly to him and increased his pride in her tenfold. Let the good order and beauty and contrivances for his individual comfort be sufficient to make his friends envious, and ready to say that his home tempts them to marry, and the wife becomes lovely in his eyes, in a far more flattering way than because she is pretty and well dressed. To become the source of a husband's comfort and rest is to have placed yourself beyond the fear of losing your complexion or ceasing to be his ideal of a pretty girl. It is also to rise from the position of a dear pet to a useful, important partner, without whose clever brains and wise direction his life would cease to be a success.

I do not claim that home-making is easy work, nor for a moment attempt to say that the fine art of good housekeeping is easily attained, but I do say, with all the strength I can put into the assertion, that the married woman who sets aside her kingdom for lack of courage and energy to rule it, is but a disinherited princess who has lost the greatest joy of life when she abdicated her throne.

/ The place a man lives in should surely be

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the place wherein sorrow and illness and death can best be borne and suffered. To the very young, these three pregnant words mean little, but when they make themselves heard, may they find the sacredness and privacy of home about you, and the tender surroundings of your own family life soothing your pain. To be happy in or to grieve in, there can be no place like the shelter which love and care have made for a man and his wife to abide in together, with the children God has given them to sweeten and hallow their inseparable lives.

### IX

#### MISTRESSES AND MAIDS

HERE seems an aggressive and ungracious assertiveness in saying that one has found the problem which has proved so difficult to many, comparatively easy of solution. Perhaps the point of view may seem hardly less trying than the original question, yet when one sees and hears the almost unbearable experiences which have caused so many homes to be abandoned and all the joy and hospitable freedom of a private house exchanged for the hotel life which is such a positive loss to any family, it tempts one at least to say : "Look at it from this standpoint, and you will see one way to smooth out the tangle."

First of all the factors which make friction between the mistress and her maid, is ignorance on the part of the mistress. To be able to give sensible directions as to how work is to be done, she must know not only the re-

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sult she wishes to attain, but every step in the process of attainment; and to be just in her judgment whether it is ill or well done, she must know how long the work ought to take, and what is the true way to do it thoroughly. It is not always as easy to see the funny side of certain housekeeper's directions, as in the case of a young matron who, looking very wise, ordered her cook to "be very careful about skinning the fish;" but there are many households in which just as extraordinary directions are given, and where the most careful rules are laid down for doing work the "wrong way foremost."

I have seen, "Remember about the fire," meant as a reminder not to let it be too warm, result in a blaze only endurable in zero weather. The maid had forgotten her master's complaints of the previous night, or perhaps never really understood them, and was wholly bent on showing that she had indeed "remembered about the fire."

A mistress cannot better lay a groundwork of bitter disappointment than by taking servants who have had their training in the

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## Mistresses and Maids

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houses of those who are conspicuously wealthy and live in a manner entirely unlike her own. It is perfectly easy to engage a waitress, for instance, who has been at service in a family where the work of the house was divided between two women, and where the requirements of the dining-room have been few, and train her to become a finished dining-room maid. Indeed, it is generally very fruitful of good results to have her feel that she is taking a step upward and learning something and becoming familiar with new forms, which represent to her greater elegance. She will make earnest efforts, and, if she is ever to be a good servant, will do her best to acquire any methods which stand in her estimation as indications of worldly distinction. But take a pantry-maid, or butler's assistant from a house where ten or twelve servants are employed, and where ideas of gentility are firmly fixed upon a silver service and elaborate ceremonial, and she will feel wholly indifferent to all your pretty decorations, annoy you by asking for innumerable things you neither own nor desire to use, and, as long as she

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lives with you, will have her own private opinion of the very small way in which you entertain, and consider your table bare and unfinished without a great silver vase of orchids, a regal display of cut glass, and a free use of champagne.

There is a laxity of discipline, a freedom of speech, in the separate world created in the large and lavish establishments, which, once acquired, can never be lost. They are servants in a different sense from that which appertains to homes, such as we think of in these papers. They are always looking for places, which is an entirely different thing from trying to secure a permanent position as a member of a family.

On every young housekeeper or troubled older matron I cannot too strongly press the advice that, having ascertained, by seeing her personally, that the previous employer is a woman of delicacy and refinement, gladly to choose your maid where she has known less of conventional rule than she will with you, rather than to accept one who may seem to have had large opportunity of learning the

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## Mistresses and Maids

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etiquette of her position in some “great establishment.”

How shall a novice judge of references? How discover the standard of excellence of the last employer?

This is a grave question.

The mutability of fortune in the United States and the absence of any defined class distinction to which certain modes of living and fixed habits of life pertain, gives rise to one of the most potent causes of trouble. In all other civilized countries the larger portion of the inhabitants belong to certain distinctly marked divisions of society, in which the new applicant for service knows precisely what will be demanded of her, and can at once decide whether she could honestly say that she understood her duties. A certain fixed wage is expected for a defined species of service, and obtains with small variation in each locality according to long usage. Here, there is nothing to guide either the employer or the employed, and experiment can alone determine whether the service is worth the wages demanded, or, on the other hand, whether the

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work is what the applicant is fitted for. The kitchen maid of last spring, this autumn becomes a very high-priced cook, and can usually find employers only too glad to engage an underling from some great establishment. Let me just here, though it is a repetition and interrupts my argument, again say that to families of moderate fortunes, or narrow means, servants from the households of the very rich are most undesirable. They are imbued with ideas of wild extravagance, they have had no personal or helpful contact with their mistresses, and generally have lived under a rule which virtually declares: "So long as your work is done, I don't care what else you do." They despise economies, rebel against strictly kept hours, and think that personal supervision is indicative of low breeding.

Every year a wider space, a higher barrier intervenes between the mistress and the servants of her household in the homes of what is known as the "smart set" in our great cities. And the ways of our great cities, without controversy, are the vanes which show how the domestic wind blows elsewhere in

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## Mistresses and Maids

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our country. There are establishments entirely supervised by impoverished gentlewomen, wholly outside the family life. These "visiting housekeepers" are responsible for everything connected with the management of these palaces.

This sort of thing may relieve a woman of fashion from a heavy burden of care, may keep many marks of tired nerves from her fair forehead, may take from her all sense of responsibility as to the lives and souls of those who sleep beneath her roof: but all the same, the burden is hers, whoever carries it, and her accountability remains. Of her whose virtues as a ruler the whole world has sung this year, it is said: "She knew and was interested in every servant who ministered to her comfort."

To talk of what we are not as mistresses, and what we cannot obtain from servants, leads to little practical result unless we can reach some helpful point of union between the interests of both the employer and the employed. Though a certain interest attaches to "how the other half live," the princely organizations of our millionaires are of little

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vital importance for those who are trying to make both ends meet on moderate incomes, or even for those who, with ample means, yet desire to live in accordance with republican simplicity and on the bases of life laid down by their ancestors.

Faithfulness to our servants is rarely thought or spoken of in comparison with the constant querulous complaint of their unfaithfulness to us, yet experience proves that despite all the exceptions so constantly brought forward, it is the faithful mistress who is rewarded by faithful service. By this word of deep and beautiful significance I do not mean indulgence, or pampering, or lack of reproof. We certainly have some clearly defined duties towards those who for the time form parts of our families. Any earnest woman who wants to know what should constitute her obligations to the women whom she governs, can quickly make a definition which ought to be both true and accurate, but I venture to say few can abide by her self-set standard without much self-denial, patience, and generosity.

The untrained young women who cross the

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## Mistresses and Maids

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Atlantic huddled in the steerages of our big "liners" can scarcely be supposed to know much of the requirements of the ladies and gentlemen who lounge in the saloon and occupy the staterooms. Years of contact with the lives of refined and fastidious people must be passed before they acquire the skill and know the usages of cultivated society. If after a year or two spent in changing from families of ever-varying grades of civilization and modes of living, one of these immigrants finds her way into your service, think of yourself as one of her educators, one of the steps upward towards a skilled, competent, trustworthy workwoman, to become which, she is toiling.

To be faithful to yourself, either take her from the first arrival and teach her from the beginning, or if this is too great an undertaking, see that she comes to you from good surroundings and brings you the real and personal knowledge of her employer embodied in her recommendation, and then give her at least half the forbearance and patience you bestow on the mistakes and forgetfulness of

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your children, whom you have carefully trained since their births. When circumstances and antecedents are taken into consideration, the wonder is, not what blunders our servants commit, but how much they do well and after the manner of gentlefolk.

Faithfulness to a servant includes instruction, reproof in gentle, helpful ways, which not only point out the fault, but show her how to avoid it; oversight of her health, provision for her comfort of body, and concessions to what may ameliorate or improve her general condition; recognition of faithful service, and of her needs as a woman. It means that as far as lies in the employer's power she shall bring the same general principles to bear which rule in a well-governed nursery; remembrance of imperfect knowledge and attainment, readiness to think that ignorance and want of training cause more trouble than intentional neglect, and to forgive omissions and commissions which are honestly confessed. Taken in this light and judiciously guided, it is sincerely to be doubted whether servants prove on the whole more ungrateful

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## Mistresses and Maids

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and unresponsive than the children on whom we lavish love, persuasion, and devotion from the day they are born. We expect refinement from those who have no birthright to this helpful gift; we expect unselfish devotion from those who owe us nothing and do not love us; we look for good manners from the ignorant, and unfailing memory from those whose untrained minds and careless, undisciplined lives have done nothing to systematize their thoughts or give steadiness to character. Are we not of those who expect grapes from thorns and figs from thistles?

If we will but justly weigh human infirmity and imperfect training, and honestly compare the shortcomings of our servants with those of our children and friends, in their relative positions, remembering what lies behind the former in the years of their humble childhood, we will wonder oftener that they do so well rather than that they forget so often. If we realize that until we have earned the precious tributes of love and reverence, they are simply working for daily bread, without any special interest, we will be surprised that they so often

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try to give us personal comfort and pleasure. If we will but be just, and patiently first learn and then teach, I can almost guarantee that any earnest woman can have not only good servants but loving friends to perform the duties of her household.

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## The Eldest Born

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### X

#### THE ELDEST BORN

THE clever and observant author of “The Garden of Peace” speaks of her newborn son as the “Heir of All the Ages.” There is much humor in her frequent mention of this important member of the family, whose first views of life were taken in the lovely flowery vicinage of the dear place, so fertile of joy that its owner had to let her cup o’erflow for the good of mankind. There is no doubt that this new “heir” of the tranquil kingdom asserted his rights.

The whole gamut of human experience seems to be needed to sing the song of welcome to the first-born child. The small, sleepy, downy head, resting on its happy mother’s arm wears an unseen crown ; the tiny little clenched hand holds an invisible sceptre. No one attempts to rival its claims, no one pauses if its inarticulate cry gives

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utterance to a want. The whole life of the family is altered, the revolution is complete. Yesterday, the master of the house was a strong man, whose preferences were the law of the realm, whose very lightest wish was studied, and whose convenience must be awaited by old and young. To-day, he treads softly upon his own stairway, hushes his song or cheery whistle, knocks ere he enters, and is an exile under his own roof. That all-conquering hero whose soft breathing could be stifled with one rude touch controls the field ; the kingdom is no longer his who founded, and furnished, and walled it about with loving care.

At this critical epoch in the life of a man, much of the future of his home and happiness hangs on his conception of his share in the new order of things. Everything depends on the view he takes of his paternity, and on his wife's ability to convey to him her unchanged devotion, even though helpless, and herself imperiously governed by her tiny son. We readily enough take cognizance of the mother's self-forgetfulness, we grow tender over the

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## The Eldest Born

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cost with which she bought her boy, and we are always trying to make cheerful and amusing the separated idle days in which she tries to restore her strength. No one fails to realize that she has won her joy bravely, or to feel that however dear, and lovely, and exalted this new path is, into which her young feet have turned themselves so courageously, she has left the rose garden of life and come to where she must climb steadfastly, without dalliance for pleasure by the way.

But apart from congratulations to a "proud father," the world holds his place at his wife's side to be devoid of much room for heroism and makes little comment on his suddenly subversed dominion. If he be a man who finds horse, or club, or swift-flying boat a substitute for the fond and undisturbed companionship which hitherto had been always at his command, even then he is a dethroned monarch; but if he is one to whom home means his rest and wife means his happiness, his first experience of fatherhood is not without demand for self-abnegation. Perhaps if young hearts looked beyond their joy that "a

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## Home Thoughts

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man is born into the world ” and saw in each demand the infant ruler makes a cipher message by which life is transmitting to them instruction for the readjustment of their dependence on each other, the new order could be made more inspiring and more helpful. They might see even more delightful days ahead than those earlier ones in which the only question was, how shall we find most pleasure? He is the manliest man who can best rule himself, and he the noblest who will use his strength to uphold the weak, and there never was a better opportunity to test such power to rule, or such willingness to serve the feeble, than when a man yields his sweet wife’s society, at every summons of a baby’s cry, and has to give up his most cherished habits that mother and boy may safely take up the first steps of their long journey.

Last year the ride, the drive, the little journey here or there; the uninterrupted hours of music, or reading, or study; the pleasant “on the spur of the minute” expeditions without plan, let, or hindrance. No

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## The Eldest Born

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more than needed, than: "Let us go," and together an adventure full of zest. Now, always an interest prior and constraining, which cannot be set aside and in which maternity has the intense comfort of being the sovereign source of good and protection, while to the father is left only loneliness, need to find occupation which is unshared, and an endeavor to fall back on his own resources.

Not seldom in the years of a long life can a reflecting observer see the unconscious mother wound and bitterly hurt a sensitive husband's heart by an absorption in her children that leaves her independent of his companionship. She does not love him less, she is sorely distressed if he seems absorbed in his affairs and is eager for his praise, but when he comes, one theme is always the ground of conversation: the children's sayings, doings, wants, illnesses, appearance. Life is a mere addendum to the nursery. Out of homes like this, surely come selfish children, demanding, controlling, and inexpressibly trying to everybody about them. The infant of days, by masterful and undeniable right, sits

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## Home Thoughts

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on the household throne; no one may say him “Nay,” but by every wise rule of government and every exercise of judgment and good sense, the revolution should be quelled when the young life has become suited to its environment, and the rightful king should reign in his own name again.

It is not an easy problem to solve; it is not a light task to accomplish, this discovery of how to add the duties of a devoted mother to those of a devoted wife, but the problem cannot be left undemonstrated, the task unexecuted. Left to chance, happiness will have to struggle for its existence and love continually have to fret its perfect cord against rough abrading places. When the intelligence of developing childhood can respond to a father’s touch and word, most children show a marked partiality for the support of a strong arm, and love a deep and cheerful voice. I am reminded here of the dear face of a little blind boy, whose sweet look of content was beautiful beyond expression as he lay on his father’s firm arm. He was delighted by being carried about, while in a cheerful

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## The Eldest Born

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tone the strong man sang soldier songs to him. The most unmistakable happiness was visible in the beloved little creature whose eyes could not see his father's face, and whose mute lips could not speak. The strong step had kept true on many a long route, but the virile dignity of the man was highest in my eyes while this frail baby enjoyed his mimic march.

The wonderful bond of paternal love is only to be known by the experience of its immeasurable strength. The childless houses of our generation are built on foundations lacking the cementing firmness which can only be tested by those who can talk together of "our children." To analyze it is as impossible as to discover the hidden mystery by which a divine Creator bids the soul live, and lights in its frail mortal tenement that immortal intelligence which cannot be quenched. Who shall count the innumerable host of querulous and selfish women who have been forgiven and maintained "for the children's sake"? How many an unworthy and debased man has been patiently cared for and tenderly for-

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given, because young voices called him father? And when the birth of an heir leads a man to make the best of his opportunities and the most of his personal endowment, it is easily seen that the upheaval of the old quiet of the initial days of married life is a step toward the attainment of the greatest end, a revolution which leads to the better government of home.

When the old prophet strove to find words to convey the uttermost expression of human well-being and delight, he brought to his aid a picture of the untamed beasts of the forest living in amity, with "a little child" as their leader. This vision of a world robbed of savage instincts and subject to innocence and love, is as fitting an illustration of the perfect home as we could seek, nor is it an exaggeration to assert that many a man would rather that his bitterest enemy should witness his debasement, than that his boy should see him stagger. While yet a child is too young for responsibility, and innocence is still his unimpaired birthright, there is an incentive to keep the atmosphere untainted which he breathes.

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## The Eldest Born

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It is sweet to realize that something unspotted from the world sleeps beneath the roof. That we daily are in contact with a heart all loving, in which hope is indigenous and full of force, is a source of great delight, and a strong incentive to beware of gloom and discontent. To meet eyes which trust us without question, to receive caresses which are not measured by our worthiness but are the spontaneous fruit of a love which seeks no proofs of our merit, cannot be a light matter to any man. These are a father's guerdon and repay many an hour of patient self-denial. If a man or woman finds the greed and false efforts of his or her world are infecting the spirit with the lowering influences they exert, God has left no such restraining power in a sinful world as the fear to injure a child or lose its love.

It is pleasant to think of the many homes to which children are daily coming on their gentle missions of discipline and elevation. Whether with sturdy growth they quickly advance to vigorous, companionable childhood and bring into the home the ministry of joy, or, through the trial of their pain and

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## Home Thoughts

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failure to advance, call forth all that lovely train of maternal characteristics which sanctify motherhood ; the patience which has no limit, the tenderness which never fails, the fortitude that shrinks from nothing which might bring relief, yet do they come to each household bearing a blessing that God has not intrusted to other hands.

### XI

#### DISAGREEABLE CHILDREN

THE mother of three darling children told me of her trials in finding an apartment in New York: "But, you see, my dear friend, they don't want my children." I heartily wished that I might have gone with her from house to house to explain that these happy little ones were acquisitions who might be gladly welcomed anywhere. But the fact that they were really a grave impediment to finding desirable lodgings set me thinking very seriously, and has made me watchful of other children and their mothers, with a view to solving the reasons.

Lately the interest then aroused has been increased by hearing the members of a summer colony congratulate themselves on the discovery that there was not a child within their borders. Yet I have seen ample reasons to justify these hard sayings, and it seems

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little short of cruelty so to bring up children that they are looked upon as public nuisances. If there is anything which should appeal to the best side of human nature in every phase of life, it is the beauty and sweetness and joy of a child, and to have them debarred from certain comfortable and desirable places because they are destructive to the peace of the people and injurious to the material beauty of the dwelling, tells a sad story of neglect and selfishness on the part of their mothers.

The three jolly little ones of whom I spoke were so attractive and delightful that even neighboring families grieved to have them leave a country place, where their pretty faces and picturesque little figures were beauty spots, as they trotted about trundling their wagons or absorbed in quiet merry plays. They were saved from fretting because they knew that "no" once said was final, and that no end of coaxing or crying did anything towards getting a thing once denied them ; they caused no disorder, for they were required to pick up and bring home their playthings ; they were never allowed to shriek when they were pleased

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## Disagreeable Children

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nor quarrel when they were vexed, and they were required to obey implicitly and at once. At the end of a six-weeks visit to a relative even the servants grieved to say "good-bye" to the merry little souls who had endeared themselves to every one, even to those who only watched them at their play. Had they found entrance where they were ruled out, I believe they would have acted as missionaries in behalf of their kind.

But there can be no doubt that few mothers have so endowed their children, and it is so much easier to let them do as they please, until the consequences begin to show themselves in their developing characters that in these days of unending occupation and diversion, in which so little time is spent either in the nursery by the mother or by the children at her knee elsewhere, an obedient and therefore happy child is seldom seen.

Whenever a self-willed, strong-minded child learns to have entire confidence in his mother's judgment and firmness, and learns to know that she always tries to give him pleasures which are good for him ; when he sees that it

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## Disagreeable Children

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to do this. How many a pleasant talk has been interrupted, how many an otherwise helpful visit has been lost by a teasing, pulling child, tormenting its mother either to listen to its demands or to go somewhere.

The whole of its life lies in what the child learns of these things, and it must either grow into selfish manhood or womanhood, or have the evil beaten out by the hard and bitter teaching of the world in which it was meant to be happy and useful, rather than to begin thus late to learn that we cannot live unto ourselves.

The nurse, that invaluable lieutenant to the mother, is greatly instrumental in making children pleasant inmates of a house and agreeable companions. Better that they never knew a word of any language but their own, that they were devoid of many society accomplishments, than that they should lack an influence always supplementing the mother's rule of faithful obedience, respect for the rights of others, and primary self-restraint, which is the foundation of all pleasant intercourse between human beings of every age.

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is not to spare herself trouble, but to save him from harm, that he is denied his wish, he will content himself, with only rare exceptions, to follow her guidance without murmuring. Whether it is through reasoning, or by the quick instinctive conclusions which childhood comes to, the result is the same, and they are admirable judges of character and great respecters of consistent government.

It is the child whose mother says "No" to-day, and "Yes" to-morrow, without any reason for the change, or who refuses utterly at first, and then is teased into saying "Just a little," who whines and cries and argues and rebels.

To learn to respect the perfection of things is of infinite value to a child. If it is a flower, to shelter and try to keep it alive, never wantonly to pluck and fling away a blossom; if it is a book, not to deface or mar it; if it is a wall, not to mark or deface it; if it is a smooth-rolled lawn, not to litter it with rubbish or deface it with wheel marks. To learn to wait patiently; all their lives long they will give thanks for having been taught how

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obnoxious child owes his condition to his mother, and she has been very cruel to him.

I have a child in my mind now, whose defiant eyes are a strange study to a child-lover, and whose repellent manner leaves you in doubt what strategy to use to keep her from injuring herself. At once you realize that not until "the last ditch" is reached will she yield a jot to your entreaties. Already you are afraid for her in the present, and in the future — alas! how will she ever meet that?

These thoughts are home thoughts and woman's thoughts, and both these combine against places where a little child is unwelcome. It is a pitiful thing to know that our selfishness and unfaithfulness can daily strengthen the barriers of their exclusion, and so add to the loss of one of the most humanizing and purifying influences God has sent into the world.

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## The Unconquerable “Ego”

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### XII

#### THE UNCONQUERABLE “EGO”

THE proverbial suffering of the hen who has to play mother to a brood of ducklings is but a faint type of what human mothers and fathers endure while educating and guiding children alien in nature and sometimes incomprehensible through mental differences.

The laughing watcher beside the barnyard pond, who sees the ruffled fowl running backward and forward, and wildly clucking and calling, while with infinite zest her water-loving flock sail off in proud serenity, may see no similarity to human life; but it is there, true even to that crucial point in the hen's wretchedness when, lured by some tempting bit below the surface, the small white heads dip deep into the water, and in their greedy enjoyment are lost to her sight. Poor mother,

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to whom the water means death, and who has no taste for aqueous beetles !

It is surely too late to question heredity or to argue about what share we have in the characteristics of our children ; broad family lines are too plainly seen under every roof to dispute on this point. But the variety in unity is a curious and interesting study, and one that makes family government a very complex matter. And sometimes one child, born under the same roof, nurtured at the same breast, guided by the same hand, will stand so apart from its brethren that one is ready to believe in the old tales of fairy changelings.

Physically, children are less variable — as to constitutional tendencies, I mean. We often see the sunny locks of a little sister, in sharp and pretty contrast with the dark curls of another, but they will nine times out of ten have a tendency to the same disorders, and prove their kinship by their resistance of others. But it is strangely different in relation to their hearts and minds. The strong and selfish go-ahead boy will crowd out even

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## The Unconquerable "Ego"

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an older brother, whose quieter nature avoids the rough contact he cannot combat.

The school-room will show two girls separated in age only by a couple of years, taught from the beginning by the same persons, and under precisely the same influences, one of whom is ambitious, shrewd, expressive, alert, while the other has to be spurred and coaxed, and even coerced to accomplish anything. The teacher calls one clever and industrious, and the other lazy and dull, but the mother's heart looks deeper, seeking the springs of action. Why should the offspring of her own quick sensitive mind be so listless and unob-servant? Why should their generous father see in one of his own little girls a selfish keenness which will have precedence over her sister at any cost?

And as time goes on, and every influence of tender care and steadfast, gentle discipline and religious guidance is brought to bear, strengthening weakness and combating evil, with what meek discomfiture do mothers every day stand before their developing children and see the dominant self in them break

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away from rule and tradition, and stand each for itself, ungovernable by any power but God's and the force of their own determination.

In the choice of professions among young men, it is intensely interesting to try to trace the germs of determining decision. The clever physician, at the head of a large and paying practice, watches for his eldest boy's maturity, eager to have him share his scientific research, happy that he has attained an eminence where there is room for his successor and namesake to stand also; a place whence he can walk forward on a plane of success, from which all the rough places have been made smooth. Some day the youth carelessly declares that he has determined on his own career; he is going to be a mining engineer or an electrician. To the remonstrance which points out that in these fields his father has neither influence nor friends, the embryo scientist counters with vehement protest against spending his life "in sick-rooms, looking at tongues and feeling pulses." Deep down in the successful doctor's heart a mine has ex-

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## The Unconquerable “Ego”

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ploded. What is all the world's applause, if to one's oldest son, life's great attainment and the recognition of his fellows, looks like this and can be summed up in a few contemptuous words like these?

We are so helpless before our children! What craving is like it; what deep-rooted desire exceeds it, this yearning for the admiration, the confidence, the respect of our sons and daughters? Lovers are all very well in their time-honored rôle; there is reason that they should fall captive to feminine charm and sweetness; the husband's fond sympathetic praise is the harvest of a love which has endured and never grown critical. But the judgment of our children is (a woman feels this to her heart's core) the true tribunal before which to set one's character for a real test of its worth. If the father is a hero to his sons, and the daughters are eagerly imitative of their mother, their characters need no other eulogy. And for a mother who, leaning on the arm of a son, knows that he is proud and glad to own his lineage, life's best laurel has been won.

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Perhaps in no other way does the strange thing which we call individuality, the thing which dwells apart in the heart and mind and makes the real man or woman, show itself so vividly as in the marriages our children make. For what reason does that vigorous, athletic, breezy fellow find his ideal in a feeble, languid, listless girl, whose interests are never roused by anything but a new bonnet, and whose only efforts arise from a desire to show that she is beautiful? Yet he will forget everything to watch her cross a room, and think her attitude, as her tall gracefulness poses on a sofa, something on which to pin the happiness of a life.

Why does the man who has lived from his birth in an atmosphere pure and elevating and fastidiously refined, find charm in noisy vulgarity, and devote himself to a woman devoid of all that makes home lovely or life worth living? What is there in his nature, which his mother has watched since first his eyes showed that he knew her (yet hidden all these years), which gives charm to coarse coquetry and brainless folly?

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And the daughters! How many a sad old heart has beaten feverishly from dread and sorrow, as the father, helpless to hinder, had to lay his daughter's hand in the greedy unclean grasp of a man he despised? The worthy, the generous, the chivalric have sought her, but here is her choice. That integral self, which has lived through education, and training, and force of example, has at last declared itself. There is something in the hidden heart which makes this choice, and the child has been all along a stranger to him, while he thought he knew her inmost thoughts.

Yet from this individual expression have come the forceful natures of the world, and were we able to form our children on a pattern shaped by ourselves, neither heroes, nor inventors, nor discoverers, nay, not even poets, would have enriched human history. Mercifully, even pain and mistakes contribute to men's greatness and women's larger nobility. I have known even sin, with its bitter experience and after deep regret, lift a man into heroism, and there is a time in the development of every family of children when in their

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maturity parents must stand aside and let nature assert itself.

Respect for what is a child's strongly declared bent is too little thought of. If your boy was meant to swim, O suffering mother! let him launch himself upon the element God fitted him for, and do not tie him to the shore.

Nothing has made so many lives abortive as the measuring of lines along which they must run. The weary hours spent by young girls and women in the endeavor to acquire traditional accomplishments for which they have neither taste nor talent, when their true vocation has been active participation in outdoor life while children, and the stirring work of social and civil amelioration in their womanhood, can never be numbered, but they have swelled the record of lost happiness.

The dedication of a girl's whole life to the social round that she abhors, because her family have always been prominent in its festivities, is surely as warping and hardening as real yet *needless* suffering always is. The pain God sends, the curb He fits to our lives,

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borne patiently, ennable, but the fret of useless thwarting ruins character.

I am far from advocating that our children should be allowed wilfully to make themselves “peculiar,” that barrier to sympathy and hindrance to success, nor that the whims of early youth should be taken too seriously, but I stand as the sturdy champion of heaven-given tendency and purpose.

No more pitiable story of misgoverned ability has been frankly disclosed to us than the life of James Russell Lowell confesses. The struggle he made to accept the law as his profession, the miserable efforts of his eager, poetic brain either to master it technically or use it as an instrument for earning his livelihood, are laid bare for us with sincere fidelity. We are carried along, our hearts aching beside him, to that thirtieth year when he was so sorely tempted to blow out the subtle brain which afterwards charmed all English-speaking men, and served his country with such great ability.

And this illustrious example, only of greater force because of the greatness of the subject,

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has its companion life in every profession, every avocation, every domestic circle in the land — lives which stand still, minds that attain nothing, but are like engines, whose throttles are for ever kept closed.

Times of great pain, incomprehensible to any other phase of human relationship, come to parents who see their children deliberately make an evil choice. Such subtly balanced arguments go on in the parental mind that none but fathers and mothers can follow ! To be cold and hard and shut the door of the heart, leave the child alone with its error ; to be tender and caressing is to set a premium on disobedience and wrong-doing. To be silent is to leave the plainest duty undone ; to “nag” and keep up a fret of argument are to kill influence and weaken affection.

Then comes that strange questioning, which never can be answered : Who planted this seed ? By what inheritance, near or remote, did this distorted view of life take root ? When did the young soul receive this smirch, which has proved a germ of loss and error ? Ah ! at these times the mother heart cries

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“out of the depths” for wisdom to compass the problem of her duty.

Yet to the observer who has lived long abundant opportunities have come to see the straightening of many a tangle, once looked on as hopeless, and watch the far-stretching happiness and influence of the widening circles from a parent family. In the midst, on days of festival, sit serene old people content with the rich harvest of their married lives. The child about whom they perhaps felt most fear has won his victory over self and wilfulness, and with the marks of the battle upon him comes back to the fountain-head of all that is good in his nature. The sailor-lad, once so eager for roaming and the restless life of the sea, is the one to whom home is the dearest. Each nature, finding its own groove, has proved its own strength or weakness, and learned the value of what in early manhood was held to mean so little.

And for the daughter, it may be set down as an axiom capable of perfect proof that she loves home and mother best when she holds her own child in her arms. The most wilful,

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reckless girl that ever lived looks at herself and her past in a new light when she folds her own baby to her heart, and her joy is never full until her mother has taken the little one in her arms.

If it be true that we none of us can read each other's hearts, and that we are always in some way engimas to each other, it is especially so in the relations of parent and child. The great difference of age, the sense of authority, the fear of being laughed at, make the child reticent of ideas foreign to his home circle; the impossibility of realizing full maturity and independent mental action in the parent, to whom his offspring are always children, makes serious obstacles to perfect understanding. To look at the families of our neighbors sometimes acts as a helpful object-lesson; we can see the true proportion of things more easily. Hope and trust are our best props; "heart within, and God o'erhead," let us try to let our children's natures grow in the paths they choose for themselves without despair of good results.

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## What Constitutes a Dull Child

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### XIII

#### WHAT CONSTITUTES A DULL CHILD

AT the close of the school year there is a stir of excitement in every home, and unceasing talk of diplomas and medals, and intense interest in the hearts of parents and children as to graduation honors. It may not be amiss to step aside for a few minutes and weigh these things in a scale which shall give their real value. There can be no question as to the joy of attainment ; the gold medal of the great school, the valedictory of the college class, are not to be spoken of lightly among this world's joys, but what they stand for in the man's future is quite another view of their importance.

To the possessor, perhaps, the medal brings the most unadulterated delight. The young collegian has already eaten more freely of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and knows himself and the world a little better, but the

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proud lad who walks forward to receive the distinguishing mark of the best scholar in his school is pale with strong emotion and envies no young heir of kingdoms. The noisy plaudits of his schoolmates, the cheers of his form, the happy tears in his mother's eyes, the grasp of his father's hand, are like the several ingredients which make up an elixir of life, fairly intoxicating to his young brain.

Yet I have in my memory to-day three such lads, who are now as commonplace men, of even less than second-rate attainment, as one could meet in a day's walk. Extraordinary facility for mathematics or fluent imaginative power of translation goes far in obtaining this sort of reward, and they do not, by themselves, stand for great vigor of thought or the finest combinations of intellectual forces.

There can be little question as to the harm done by too urgently requiring that a child should bring home reports which shall show the highest marks. The father who tears up a paper and throws it down in disgust because his boy has gained only eighty-five out of a

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possible hundred marks, has done one of two things: the child will over-exert himself to attain, or he will grow bitter over the injustice which underrates conduct in the scale, or demands what he cannot give.

There are minds feminine and masculine to which "original problems" are impossibilities, whose grasp of facts is wonderfully strong, and in which deduction of rational truths is remarkable. To be a "gold-medal" or a school leader, requires a general all-round capability, a power to turn from physical science to numbers, from poetry to prose, and to combine quickness of thought with quickness of expression, not often joined in the very highest type of mind.

If we could take up the school records of our greatest men, even those in which the achievement is wholly intellectual, it would be a source of surprise to us to see how few of them had been foremost in their classes. How often in these days do we hear a classmate say: "So-and-So is our best man, but he does not go in for honors." He has found his bent, his "specialty," and given

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himself to sowing what he may reap years hence.

Many a discouraged mother and many a weary puzzled child grow sad over the persistent mediocrity in school, which is inconsistent with the grave thoughtfulness of home questions and the aptitude to acquire home instruction. If a youngster shows a reasonable alertness in getting information upon the subjects naturally of interest to him, and evinces that immeasurably great gift, common sense, let us be very slow to lay his mind upon any scale of measurement set up by this or that school-master, and because it falls short count him deficient.

Facility of speech or with the pen counts for so much in all phases of school competition that only they who have seen and deeply considered its influences can estimate them. And in a boy's career oratory and a talent for declamation always make him conspicuous. The graceful, fluent speaker always finds himself prominent, and if he has also quickness of perception and a fair verbal memory, he will readily pass for an "exceed-

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ingly brilliant mind," that stereotyped phrase for what is readily in evidence.

Home education has the great advantage of developing the minds of children far more symmetrically than the ordinary school discipline, because there is so much greater opportunity for individual observation and of strengthening the weak places. But, in the other arm of the scale lies the serious danger of allowing foibles and eccentricities to grow, unchecked by the wholesome friction with an indifferent crowd of school-fellows, and there is ever present the demon of vanity to make the clever child think itself a genius while it has no one to struggle against.

There is something very touching and thought-compelling in these yearly returning epochs, when doors close on young lives and they go home with their harvests. And I fear me that many will be underestimated who have done good if not showy work, because they carry no trophies in their hands. Let us be very scrupulously careful how we judge of results, and let the mother-heart help the mother's ambition to sound conclusions.

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There are not a few instances where extraordinary verbal memory has made a lad ready for college long before his legitimate time, and before his mind could grasp the deeper meaning of his studies, and yet in the practical use of his faculties he has been below the average of very commonplace boys. The less rapid work of the apparently duller minds is for all the nobler uses of life worth double the phenomenal advancement of the abnormal classmate. It is a great help to a struggling and partially discouraged child to understand this, and not to be allowed to think that the most rapid acquisition is always the surest and best means of advancing. And let us be especially careful to nurse every little spark of pride and encourage every token of effort.

Do not let the home-coming be clouded by rebuke and reproach, which endanger something far more precious than cultivation of the intellect. Let it be a sure thing that home is dear, and the first meeting with father and mother a joy which cannot be dimmed. If a child offers for excuse that it

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does not understand, believe it implicitly, and lay at least half the weight of school failures on the teacher's shoulders; so many wonderfully clever men and women cannot teach. Imparting knowledge is a very different matter from attaining it, and thousands of pupils have never been taught how to study. Nor is every well-intentioned master able to arouse purpose or ground endeavor upon principle.

Sincerely do I hope that Dux will not carry off all the honors at home as well as on prize day, and that modest little Tom, who has so many times during the last term wiped his eyes over his Gallic wars, may be comforted by an acknowledgment of his faithful endeavor. Wait long enough and we shall hear the trumpets ring out for him, "See the conquering hero comes," or science hold its breath over the discovery he has made by patient plodding in his laboratory.

### XIV

#### CHILDREN AS OUR JUDGES

OUR sophisticated minds can hardly realize the unprejudiced, "at first hand" impressions of young children, and it would doubtless be a book of amazing revelation which should record in any ordinary family the thoughts of these children about their parents.

A busy young matron, full of affairs, running hurriedly back to her interrupted work, encountered her five-year-old girlie at the head of the stairs. The brown eyes were very serious and inquiring. "So you forgave Mrs. Timmins, mamma; I saw you kiss her good-by."

Astonished at the child's evidently anxious mood and solemn little address, she said hastily: "What in the world do you mean, Rosa? I have nothing to forgive Mrs. Timmins."

"Oh! but you were so angry when she

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came, and I heard you tell auntie that she was tiresome and very annoying, and that you had no time for her long visits, and I heard you speak so nicely when she went away and tell her to come in whenever she could, and then when you kissed her I knew you were not angry any more."

Kisses in nursery-land meant repentance accepted and the seal of full forgiveness, and Rosy's heart, troubled for her irritated mother, felt that now she had come out into the "clear shining" of peace, and that her visitor was assoiled of all her sins. Over the nursery mantelpiece was an illumination : "Truth before all things."

Mamma's cheeks glowed with an unusual flush as she reseated herself at her desk, and she said to her sister : "Children do think the most extraordinary things."

The whole category of our small or great inconsistencies passes before this unimpanelled jury. They listen with eagerness to whatever reveals to them the realities of life; they are intensely interested in what makes known to them the aims and purposes of

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their parents. They weigh the meaning of words and turn them over and over in their strangely acquisitive minds, trying to gather what the true import is.

The most loving and careful tuition as to what is true or charitable or honest, is as nothing before the influence of our petty treacheries to our social affiliations and our joy over a keen bargain. The triumph of the man who rehearses to his wife how he "got the best" of his fellow-struggler in the transactions of the day, sets a fair-minded boy wondering in a very curious fashion as to what that sort of success means, and if he loves his father, he assures himself that it must be right and a fine thing to take advantage when the opportunity arises. No need to warn Tom Jones that the arrow he has chosen is not straight nor to tell him of the danger of a stumble on the track: "He ought to use his eyes and look out for himself."

Not seldom do we lose that love which is the innermost craving of our lives, that half-adoring love which some few mothers win from their children, because they have uncon-

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## Children as Our Judges

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sciously tested our largeness of heart and sincerity of word and deed toward others, and found us wanting. The life of the world, the measureless something which we call "social obligation," so tends to "make-believes" of every sort, that we continually offend their unsophisticated ideas of right and wrong, and without formulating their decisions, they no longer look to us as fulfilling their ideas of honor and truth.

Especially injurious to our children's respect for us is the detection that we live beyond our means, that we are trying to appear to have what we have not, and that to do this, we are willing to buy what we cannot pay for. The boy whose eager ambition reaches out for further educational advantages which he is told that his father cannot afford, has his own ideas of the costly decoration of the dinner-table and the magnificent gowns in which his mother sits at its head. The girl who knows that her ball-dress represents a merchant and a dressmaker unpaid is not satisfied by the notice its pre-eminent beauty won from the reporters in the

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public press, nor is her mother as dear to her as if she had denied her the luxury she could not afford.

If we can win the belief of our children in the practical reality of our principles, that the laws we make for them are obeyed by us because we believe they are right, we have done more to win a lasting affection than if we indulged their wildest whims at the cost of their respect.

I doubt if anything lowers a mother more effectually and permanently in her daughter's eyes than the pursuit of so-called "social recognition" by aping and rivalling those richer and more prominently before the public. The dance may have been delightful, the scene a dream of loveliness, but deep down in the heart of the girl, who knows that her admission has been toiled for and angled for through weary days of joyless visiting and the bestowal of unsought attentions, there is something left which makes it all a very dear purchase at such exceeding cost.

Manceuvring of all sorts is instinctively abhorrent to normal, right-minded children,

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and they are very shrewd in their discernment of it. They find it more trying to have been cajoled than to have been obliged to do a thing because it is right. And insincere speech is a very thin disguise to their clear-eyed perception, whether addressed to themselves or to others.

Many a young girl of twelve or fourteen, called to the drawing-room to see some interested visitor, has returned to the school-room with very confused thoughts as to what her mother meant by saying all those delightful things to the ladies she had just met, when she had so often heard her say that she disliked or disapproved of them. The sense of weariness often precedes emancipation and "coming out" into the place and privileges of the world; already it seems too great a toil to be so unreal and so untrue to her convictions as her mother has to be.

Unloving hospitality is also a source of wonder to children. What is it all for, this beautiful and laboriously prepared entertainment of folk who are neither friends of the heart nor closely bound in any way? "We

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really *must* ask those people to dinner" has a strange meaning which they cannot puzzle out. The discussion of the weakness, the folly, and the bad form of the guests so honored, after all has been done that money and skill can devise to gratify their eyes and their palates, does not make it easier for an honest boy and girl to understand and trust their parents implicitly.

Our children ought to act upon us as extraordinary promoters of nobility of character: to be, as it were, detected by them in doubtful purposes and unworthy efforts for unworthy ambitions is a terrible loss and humiliation. To have them dependent upon us for amusements and enjoyments and indulgences may give us a certain ephemeral hold upon them; but they should be to us as an infallible test of the purity of our intentions and the spotlessness of our endeavors. What would they feel toward us if they realized that we were screwing and pinching and turning and twisting to seem to spend \$20,000 a year when we have but ten? What would they say in their hearts if they

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## Children as Our Judges

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knew that we were toiling day and night to appear intimate with this or that millionaire simply because of his millions and the power it gives him to be lavish in his entertainments?

“Behold, we count them happy who endure,” said one who knew the joy of self-conquest; and children brought up in homes where they are sharers in self-denial because it is right not to have all they want, get ten times more pleasure out of life than if they were shut out of their father’s struggles and left to wonder at the strange incongruity between their indulgence and the importunate calls for payment at the door.

Family life ought to be one of open confidence between parents and children on points affecting the family income and the general good, and to let the youngsters stumble on the fact that they have no right to what they enjoy, is not only to wound their own self-respect, but to lower father and mother to a place from whence they must needs pity them.

The definition of all the vital points of noble character is puzzled out by boys and

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girls through the living exemplification found in the conduct and the speech of the elders of the family. If small deceptions mark the mother's daily life, they become to them the standard of the easily sliding scale which shall weigh how much truth is required in their daily lives. If the laying bare of our neighbor's shortcomings and sins is the theme for piquant conversation at the dinner-table or around the evening fire, respect dies in their hearts for some one, it may be for the wounded neighbor, it may be for ourselves.

The dress and bearing of mature women greatly affect their sons and daughters; she has lost what the world's wealth cannot buy back whose son has found an artificial color on her cheek, or regretted that his mother's dress was more costly and fashionable than decorous. The daughter who has detected in her mother's manner the craving for compliment and admiration from any other man than her father, has been robbed of more than a principality, and can never be as tender or trustful of her sex as before.

Childless men and women are to be honored

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## Children as Our Judges

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in unusual degree who, for one another and themselves, hold to the highest standards of life and character. The limpid, steadfast gaze of a child's pure eyes is as a defence against the lower temptations of our natures; the confiding caress of a proud son is as an armor against the folly to which thoughtless vanity so often tempts a careless pretty woman.

Beside the coffin of a mother who had lived out more than ninety noble years, her children stood and looked at her unwithered, calm face, and "called her blessed." "She never thought an evil thought, nor spoke an untruth in her whole life," said one, with trembling lips, as he bent over her. Looking at the still dignity of her fine presence, commanding even in death's rigidity, her descendants took account of themselves, questioning if they were living up to her standard. It must be a terrible experience to see the last of father and mother and long to blot out the record of their influence! To have the light of a home go out with clouds of regret and sad remembrance, hindering love, is one of the most tragic of human vicissitudes.

### XV

#### OUR FRIEND THE FAMILY DOCTOR

DOMBEY'S weakness before Susan Nipper is as nothing to the utter helplessness of us all before the doctor. A wife may plead with an obstinate husband, a mother argue with an imprudent daughter or a reckless son, and find that her efforts have no more result than that which spray may have upon a New England rock ; but let the medical man get his hand upon the pulse or his trained ear over the lungs, and the whole face of things is changed. No more late hours, no more dancing in thin gowns, no more nightly revelling. It is a study worth pursuing, this yielding of the strong, this sobering of the frivolous, this checking of life's waste, at the bidding of a man whose only authority lies in respect for his profound knowledge and confidence in his truthful speech. If ever one

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## Our Friend the Family Doctor

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needed a demonstration that knowledge was power, here it is.

“The Son of Sirach” seems to have had many thoughts upon the subject of physicians, as he put his shrewd Hebraic lessons into shape. “Honor the physician with the honor due unto him,” he says emphatically, but he adds with grim suggestion that he had at times suffered many things at the hands of the medical men of his time: “He that sinneth against his Maker, let him fall into the hand of the physicians.” There is an inexpressible force in these last words which leave many possibilities amusingly open to imagination, and I fear me that there are American nineteenth-century affirmations of the preacher’s idea of condign punishment easily to be obtained.

Eagerness of research and thirst for provings have altered somewhat the course of medical thought. It has become possible for the man best furnished to be least able to take the duties of a “family physician.” How and why, rule too rigidly his contact with disease; investigation becomes the

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almost absorbing influence of his life. Men become specimens in his eyes, and he is less eager to prolong the beating of a laboring heart than to know why it threatens to stop its work. Experiment, which teaches, is too dear to the discoverer, the opportunity of research too precious in his eyes, to leave room for ministry to the agony of hearts whose only disease is grief. But my bent to-day is far from critical ; my mind turns with delight rather to the expression of the gratitude we owe to the men whose coming is the harbinger of comfort if it cannot be of cure, and of whom we may say without irreverence that “ their compassions fail not.”

The “ Hippocratic oath ” covers as with a shield the laying bare of the secret family histories which the family physician knows as no one else but God can know. This solemn promise of secrecy is unnecessary to the man most fitted for the confidence reposed in him, but it binds those of lower character by a stern repression. Not infrequently the doctor knows what the husband’s love is guarding from his wife’s anxious eyes,

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## Our Friend the Family Doctor

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sparing her while he may; and perhaps at the same time holds her secret too. No "skeleton" can be closed in a locked closet from his eyes. If the mother's strength fails and her cheek grows pale without any token of disease, he has to know that wakeful, tearful nights over a child's misdoings are sapping her vitality. If a business man's strength fails and his hand trembles, he has to find out that it is a closed mill or a false debtor that is shaking his nerve power. If a youth is brought to him for cure, he must learn whether he is poisoning himself with alcohol, or draining his strength by dissipation. Nothing can be hidden. Men and women come and go, and the fair surface of exterior life is as beautiful and sparkling in the world's eyes as if nothing was wrong beneath; but if the doctor should chance to have time to mingle with the other guests, he wonders at the Spartan courage which upholds the harassed man and half-despairing woman on whose shoulders the order of the home depends.

Other friends and other professional aids

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have their special duties ; the doctor is in everything that stirs the family life. He is the first to welcome the newborn, the last to leave the dying. The pale young mother, glad with the first cry of her firstborn, gives him her wan smile, and the widow watches him lay his kind hand over the eyes that can no longer see. I marvel sometimes how men can live on, going their way day by day and year by year, from house to house, always the centre of the strongest emotions the family life is capable of ; how they can endure the strain of meting out life's measure.

We count it heroic to nerve ourselves to "break" (as our strange phrase is) bad news to those we love, though we do it for love's sake ; but these brave men must daily, nay, in some cases hourly, quench hope's last ray and bid men set "their houses in order." Nor does use harden those best endowed for this stern duty. I have seen the blood leave a great doctor's cheek as pale as that of his patient, as he forced himself to say that disease had conquered nature, and science had no remedy. I have known such tidings told so

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## Our Friend the Family Doctor

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tenderly that the first instinct of the foredoomed man was to grasp the doctor's hand.

Strange burdens are laid on the doctor's shoulders; he must advise where one is to live, what school will best suit the boys, how much exercise the girls may take, how much wine the father must drink, where the family shall travel. When you come to analyze these questions they have a professional germ in them, but if they are honestly thought over and seriously answered, a great deal of brain work is gotten from them which cannot be put into the bill.

Nor do the demands stop with these questions which do remotely bear on the mutual relations between the medical adviser and the family. Doctors are frequently called upon to try moral suasion on troublesome boys and wayward girls. Many times, especially if the advice comes from one familiar at their bedside from infancy, it will have extraordinary influence for good, and succeed where the earnest expostulation of a clergyman has failed. There is a certain preliminary acknowledgment, especially in a young man's mind, that

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“the doctor knows all about it,” and that no disguise or prevarication will prevail.

There is much inveighing against doctors' bills and a very common feeling that the grocer and butcher must be paid, but that the doctor can wait. This arises unquestionably from the fact that we are already burdened when we send for him, and that, unlike our other needs, we cannot control how much or how little it will take to satisfy them. Die we must unless the doctor can aid us, and what he does for us he measures himself. With people living on small salaries, or in any way under the restraint of narrow means, days of illness mean always added expense of every sort, and if it be the head of the house who is ill, loss of income also, and in this way the doctor's bill becomes part of the general infliction.

That a thousand-dollar fee seems an immense sum to pay for an operation which takes only an hour of a man's time is surely true, and there is a very bitter feeling natural to those who crave the utmost skill for their dear ones that such a demand puts the relief

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out of their reach. Yet, who shall weigh the strength which goes out of a man, the loss of nerve-power and vitality in that hour for which he demands so much? Who shall measure what he has done and endured to achieve his skill? Who shall analyze what he has to bear when under the knife a patient dies? In the making and the working of a great surgeon there are experiences which they only know, which no money can repay.

Those who grumble most over the dues demanded by doctors are least aware what noble liberality is shown by the profession in the gift of their highest skill and of priceless time in which they might refresh themselves, entirely "without money and without price." And this, outside the walls of hospitals, merely in response to appeals in behalf of those who were not able to come to them as paying patients.

I have seen a great specialist gently tear a check in two and lay it on a convenient table after he had made a visit which involved a journey and the loss of half his day, because he knew the money would be a comfort to

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his patient. And I have known the same man to treat case after case with his utmost skill and care, without a thought of payment ; and, if his purse now overflows, he could have doubled his fortune had he always had paying patients.

That there are many grasping, selfish, and even unjust physicians goes without saying ; they are of our common humanity, and no profession, business, or trade is without men with these characteristics ; but that, as a body, they labor more for the relief of the suffering of the world without adequate reward than any other class of educated men, I sincerely believe cannot be questioned.

Their opportunity is unique, but their influence and assistance in the history of our households is a great testimony to the sympathy and patience and large-hearted comprehension of man with and for his fellow-man in this urgent, crowded, self-seeking age of ours. Human brotherhood which has no name or guild is vitally alive among our doctors. Sleepless nights and anxious days, hours of tense apprehension, the exertion of almost

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## Our Friend the Family Doctor

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superhuman ingenuity to relieve pain, mark the going to and fro of many a quick-moving "buggy" in our busy streets; and if one in a thousand is so fortunate as to acquire wealth as the result of his practice, let us rejoice for him.

But recently has Mr. Watson, in the "Bonnie Brier Bush," given us a picture of the noblest type of a physician; he who with a likeness to the divine "Good Shepherd" looked upon the humble cottages scattered over the bleak Scotch hills as under his watch and ward, and carried the joys and sorrows of their occupants in his great heart as part of his own experiences of life. One reason why his story has taken such hold on our affections is the knowledge we have personally of things similar. Few ties are more close, few affections more enduring, than those which attach us to him whom we summon in our time of greatest need; few so strong to help as a great physician who is also a good man.

### XVI

#### THE SNARE OF USELESS REGRET

“**W**HEN you have done the best your circumstance allows, and acted according to what you thought was your duty, you have nothing to do with unfortunate results.” This was the fixed and cheerful opinion of a wise woman who had a full share of disappointment to contend against in her vigorous and often troubled life. It had a most encouraging effect upon her husband and her household, and totally banished from the family life those spirit-killing hours of depressing retrospection, in which men and women sit with folded hands and wish they had left something undone, or regret that they have not done what was omitted.

Her cheerful voice always met her husband’s protestations of regret for his steps taken too hastily, or under obstinately main-

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## The Snare of Useless Regret

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tained delusions, with the tone of encouragement of an advancing general. "It is done now, dear, let us set to work to make the best of it and see if we can find our way out." Her pleasant eyes always saw some hilltop in the distance on which the sunshine lingered, and she pressed forward with a strong heart.

We are all too prone to make sure that our own or our neighbors' mistakes have caused our ills, when very often there is little real relation between cause and effect, and the evil would have cropped up as surely in another atmosphere as in the one we have made by choice. This is especially so in regard to our children. Their shortcomings or evil tendencies we lay to the school we chose for them, the companionships we allowed; the habit we had not noticed has become fixed; the blunted sense of higher morality is dulled, and we had not realized that exaggeration had increased to untruth, and the endeavor to compass an end had fostered deception.

We often encounter a sad-eyed mother who, while seeking advice for some disap-

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pointing son, will tell, with deep distress, that it was because he had learned evil in places where she had chosen to put him, and self-accusation and a quenchless regret make her voice pitifully tremulous. Yet had the same child remained at her knee through all his developing years, and never felt the friction of schoolboy influence, nine chances out of ten he would have turned out exactly the same untruthful lad, or been precisely as dead to the obligations of moneyed responsibility.

The greatest care and study of the "best possible" often lands a family in a home unsuited to its needs; the world outside its walls is not one that encourages mental or physical health and growth, the interior arrangements prove inadequate and beget expense. "If we had only stayed where we were; if we could only recall this false step!" Alas! false steps of this sort are not easily retraced, and it is the waste of every vital force to roll the error and its results perpetually in the dust of our disappointed way until it becomes to us a sort of monster of iniquity. In one variation or another, the

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## The Snare of Useless Regret

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unconquerable often meets the housewife, and there is nothing to be done but to make our plans of life fit the groove in which they must run and take unto ourselves a new way to live. To look out of the windows of our discontent for that which can never come, is to deprive life of its last chance of happy development.

But there is a deeper, sterner phase of regret which comes to many a woman's and to many a man's heart, the indulgence in which is death to endeavor and a slow and sure destruction of usefulness and character. The gay girl who plighted her troth much after the fashion in which she accepted a partner for a dance; the deeper-hearted woman who finds she has loved what her own fancy created, and has married a selfish and unworthy man; the man who has mistaken a fair white robe for a pure heart, and a gracious manner for a noble nature,—these and their congeners stand face to face with terrible catastrophes, which threaten their own lives, the well-being of society, and the maintenance of home.

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Here regret rises to the force of despair and threatens not only to kill cheerfulness of spirit and blind our judgment of our daily affairs, as do our minor missteps, but holds in its snare, engines of destruction powerful to wreck principle and destroy hope. Would that such unfortunately mated lives could take refuge in the energy of effort to master the result of their mistakes and resolve to endure all things, strive without rest, work without ceasing, in determined resolve to go forward and not back, and find that gleam of good and light which every human situation holds hidden in some unsuspected possibility. To "act in the living present, heart within and God o'erhead," is worth more to the most desperate position in life than all the deepest meditation of nerveless regret can bring to bear in a lifetime of gloomy passivity. Nothing can persuade me that effort of this sort is ever wholly lost.

That we failed to discover this symptom of coming disease; that we made no quicker effort to seek advice; that, being absorbed by the whirl and stress of life, we did not mark

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## The Snare of Useless Regret

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the growth of a bad habit in our children,—all these are coils in that fell snare which threatens to entrap us and create a morbid self-centred condition of mind, which leaves us a prey to one of the worst forms of misery. If we have done wrong, if we have been negligent, if we have failed to judge truly of the relative importance of what have seemed to us paramount duties, we have erred and we cannot restore things to their first estate. Only one worthy thing remains for us to do; to be and give our best to alleviate, and help, and cure, and gladden all who are affected by our misapprehension. All the tears our eyes can shed will do no good, all the self-accusations we can pile up will heal no wounds, all the dark counsels we can take with our sore hearts will relieve no pain. We have to treat ourselves as God treats the world; the sun arises on the darkest night, and its beneficent warmth and light are not diminished by the clouds which brooded over the earth at midnight.

To many, nay to most women, comes too often the realization that they have wilfully

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done their dearest ones harm. They have followed their own judgments against advice, they have been bad stewards of their husbands' earnings, they have maintained a standard of living beyond their means, they have demanded for their daughters dresses and indulgences not rightly theirs, they have added to the restricted allowances of their sons the injudicious gifts which make dissipation possible. Here comes an array of forces to overshadow home life and bring the overruling spirit of the wife and mother into stupefying inactivity and pain.

All the gloomy hours of the day and night can never remedy the wrong. The trouble is real enough, God knows! We do not have to turn it inside out in the sunshine or spend the nights in reading our own indictments, to convince ourselves that we are in the wrong. Time so spent does little more than weaken nerves and bewilder judgment, and make us a shadow projected upon an already cloudy sky. The wounded can never be without a scar, but we can live to fight many a strong battle and wear the laurel of many a happy victory,

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## The Snare of Useless Regret

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and the war cry has to be “forward and not back, up and not down,” if we are to be worth anything in the world.

“I see it all now!” Those terribly depressing words, which so often end the story of a life’s trouble, are so frequently spoken in a tone of hopeless dejection, which includes and fosters a sinking into the lifelessness of effortless regret. The mariner, who, chartless, finds for himself the cruel reef on which his ship has struck, sails no more above that spot. It would indeed be a madman who dropped anchor near his danger and gave himself up to observation of what had caused him to be so nearly shipwrecked. Let us, like ships warned of the perils of the sea, press on with every strenuous power we have, to safer and happier harbors, to which we may carry the treasure of our life’s endeavor.

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## Home Thoughts

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### XVII

#### WIVES AS PARTNERS: KEEPING ACCOUNTS

“ Dear, it is twilight time, the time of rest.  
Ah ! cease that weary pacing to and fro ;  
Sit down beside me in this cushioned nest,  
Warm with the brightness of our ingle-glow.  
Dear, thou art troubled. Let me share thy lot  
Of shadow, as I shared thy sunshine hours.  
I am no child, though childhood, half forgot,  
Lies close behind me, with its toys and flowers ;  
I am a woman, waked by happy love  
To keep home’s sacred altar-fire alight.  
Thou hast elected me to stand above  
All others in thine heart. I claim my right.  
Not wife alone, but mate, and comrade true ;  
I shared thy roses, let me share thy rue.

“ Bitter ? I know it. God hath made it so,  
But from His hand shall we take good alone,  
And evil never ? Let the world’s wealth go.  
Life hath no loss that love cannot atone.  
Show me the new hard path that we must tread,  
I shall not faint, nor falter by the way ;  
And be there cloud or sunshine overhead,  
I shall not fail thee to my dying day.

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## Wives as Partners

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But love me, love me, let our hearts and lips  
Cling closer in our sorrow than in joy ;  
Let faith outshine our fortunes in eclipse,  
And love deem wealth a lost and broken toy.  
Joy made us glad, let sorrow find us true ;  
God blessed our roses, He will bless our rue.”

THESE verses, cut from a number of “All the Year Round,” when Charles Dickens edited that magazine, came vividly to my mind while trying to encourage a suddenly impoverished woman. Alas ! the easy, indulged lives of American women are not helpful to building up characters fit to meet sudden reverses ; with the best intentions they may be wholly incapable of immediately changing their long-established methods, and often they have very scant conception of what they spend or what it costs to live.

The almost universal and misleading habit of having things “charged” permits one to spend a hundred dollars in a day without the least realization of what we have done. We know that we have purchased very simple and inexpensive things ; the cashmere was only

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eighty cents a yard, the silk only a dollar and a quarter ; the napkins were only six dollars a dozen, and the vase which tempted us at the china shop was only five, “ the cheapest thing anybody ever saw ! ” Not one woman in ten adds up the sum total as she leaves a shop or multiplies the price of her cheap silk by the number of yards. She has just done “ a little very needful shopping,” and is utterly astonished to hear her husband say : “ Your bill at Taffeta’s is very large this month.”

Bills in very many instances are sent directly to the husband’s office, and multitudes of women, wives of only moderately rich men, are wholly unaware of what they really spend on themselves and their children.

It seems, on the face of it, quite an impossible thing that a conscientious woman, meaning to be a just steward of her husband’s money, and above all things desirous not to burden him, should live in this dreamland concerning what she spends ; yet I am sure that there are very many women who would indorse the truth of this broad statement.

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## Wives as Partners

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Of course the doctrine of partnership which I so earnestly uphold, in contravention to the general custom of indulgent supply without laying the responsibility of copartnership on the wife, precludes this one-sided arrangement for providing for personal needs and household necessities. To be an unenlightened consumer tempts the feminine nature, almost universally acquisitive of things beautiful, to possess all she legitimately can which shall either adorn herself or her home. "Goods sent to No. 10 North Roland Street, bill to No. 44 Traffic Square," rolls off the tongue with astonishing ease and volubility, and a large debt accumulates with a rapidity as amazing as the growth of a mushroom.

Even an allowance hardly stops the evil, so often does the appearance of the monthly bill exceed expectations, and the wife, have with humiliation to ask for a supplementary check.

If we could but believe, really believe (not theorize, as we are apt to do about all that is super-material), that the delightful aspect of things and the beauty of our attire are not

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essentials to happiness when men and women truly love each other, both husband and wife would lift great burdens from their bent shoulders and aching hearts. Could we sincerely have faith in the trite proverb which tells us that a “dinner of herbs with contentment” can be made a very good dinner indeed, we would breathe more freely. If we could, when reverses and sore straits of poverty attack us, see with clear vision what it means to a man to know that his dinner is paid for, and that he can afford it, the trial of a narrow purse would fade into insignificance.

A few large-hearted, clear-eyed men and women whom I know, have set fine examples of this way of attacking an enemy, which after its manner was as formidable to them as was Goliath to the ruddy-faced David, and I have seen it demonstrated that happiness was ready to enter the homes so guarded by honesty and cheerfulness, and stood eager to abide with them.

One especial instance stands out in my catalogue of those who have conquered fate by good cheer and good sense, and I trust

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## Wives as Partners

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my heroine and hero will forgive me for making use of them to bolster my theory and transform it into a fact. Out of a home of singular plenty and comfort they stepped across a chasm into the simplest country shelter and the narrowest limit of expenditure possible to gentle-folk. No merrier jests ever gave "Attic salt" to a barely sufficing meal, no more cheerful looks ever brightened a home of which even the material illumination was a dreaded item. The reality of their deprivations can be measured by the first use of a fortune which came like the fabled rewards of a fairy godmother: "What shall I buy first? I shall have a bath-room and plenty of hot water." Yet mutual encouragement, a sense of proud independence, and hearts rejoicing in finding how much joy there is in life outside of material possessions made them strong, and they overflowed with a healthful mental vitality which ill health and accident and a long, strong pull up-hill could not harm.

But mere acquiescence to the deprivations which misfortune brings does not insure the

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result aimed at. If the home-made gown is worn with a dejected manner and occasional allusion to the trial of having an ill-fitting garment, the husband will not smile and think how well his wife looks in anything, but the zest of his simple meal will be taken away and he will sadly ponder on the cruel fate that robs him of the opportunity and privilege to adorn her beauty. If the negative side, the story of what we have not, is always uppermost, it will cast a shadow which our utmost effort cannot banish.

It must be all or nothing with us as co-adjudicators; we must mean exactly what we say when we declare, "If you are left to me, I don't care what else is taken." Could any stimulus warm the blood in a man's chilled heart like these few words? But to utter them and then betray every hour of the day that we are mourning and craving for things we covet and cannot have, is but to torture him.

No matter how large or small a woman's income or limit of expenditure is, she should keep accurate accounts. Not after the method

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## Wives as Partners

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of one dear woman, whose entries ran like these:

One pound of candy . . . . .	\$00.80
Two pairs shoe-strings . . . . .	.10
Sundries . . . . .	35.00

I quote literally from a page in a carefully balanced and regularly kept daily expense book. "Sundries" really meant that she could not account for thirty-five dollars, but she took pleasure and pride in her "correct balance." For years this book and its successors tell the same story of conscientious habit and endeavor, and absolutely entire ignorance of what she really did with her money. It seems on the first glance a mere matter of common sense and propriety to understand clearly how much we spend and what we obtain for it.

If trouble comes, it is then all plain what we can or cannot afford and what it will cost to do any proposed thing in the household. Does such a thing cost so much? Then we shall have to do without it, but a substitute is easily within our reach.

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Women touched by the sorrows of the very poor, or the grievous pain of the great, aching world, are very frequently ardently anxious for a field in which to suffer and deny themselves in behalf of their fellow-creatures ; but she who can maintain a cheerful composure, and be ready with artful resource of feminine alternative, who can out of the bitter, extract a sweet which shall be as nectar to her husband's thirst for peace, has to display a heroism as exalted and qualities as noble as those evinced by the devoted women who stand tireless beside the dying or stanch the flow of blood from gaping wounds.

The unselfishness which brings a wife into true co-operation, the love which makes sacrifice a joy, are essential to the success of the woman who means to prove that fortune is not all that makes a man rich. She has to rise above the plane of duty well done, she has to aspire beyond "making the best of things," and become creative. She has to produce light and courage, and give to the faded new brightness, and gild the worn

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## Wives as Partners

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and marred, and lend to all they possess “the magic of her smile.”

Practical, everyday, work-a-day effort becomes necessary: the learning how to do things heretofore left to skilled hands, and how to do without things heretofore considered essentials. Refinement, decorum, dignity, need never be sacrificed; one of the most queenly women I ever saw received me in a log-cabin and fed me with a dinner which she had cooked with her own slender hands. Her appearance at the head of her rudely made table on which stood old silver that had been buried during the civil war which had wrecked her fortunes, was so pathetic that tears stood in the eyes of her guests, but she and the place were essentially typical of high breeding and its requirements.

To stand shoulder to shoulder in the long and wearing months, and oftener years, in which a man and wife fight against the hard pressure of broken fortune, sometimes, alas! without possible recuperation, endears and binds them together in a tenacious fashion that cannot weaken. Soldier-comrades who

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have stood side by side in the trench or together scaled a steep height are hard to separate, and a husband and his helpmeet outrival them a hundred-fold, when the strong man has found feminine weakness transformed to a resistance greater than his own, through love and faithfulness in which self died.

### XVIII

#### ETIQUETTE OF FAMILY LIFE

“ **I**F a fellow can’t do as he pleases in his own home, I’d like to know what it is good for,” was the sincere exclamation of a schoolboy, whose extreme courtesy had been commented on by a lady lately his hostess. His gratified mother, in repeating these compliments to him, said that she was particularly pleased, because his careless habits at home so often caused her regret and anxiety. The above quotation was his candid expression as to the folly of exercising politeness and deference in family life. Nor was he at all an exceptional or isolated example of those who are scrupulously careful of every conventional decorum among strangers, gentle to the aged, kindly to children, thoughtful of the comfort and convenience of the households in which they visit,

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and yet steadfastly ignore every one of these delightful things as soon as the home door is closed upon them.

Nor was he only an exponent of a boy's ideas. It may be too sweeping an assertion to say that he exemplifies the conduct and belief of half the men and women in perhaps the majority of families, yet surely the number is not small who think as he did and live as he lived. And the inconsideration, the rough speech, the readiness to give trouble, the satisfying of self and personal predilection, "harks back" to a native barbarism, which is kept alive in the heart, however perfect the veneer of social convention may appear.

There are only too many households in which a perpetual friction brings out sparks of irritation, which mar the whole mutual existence of the family and rob home of any semblance of peace and rest. There are houses in which order and beauty would be wholly lost if it were not for the patient vigilance of one, on whom the burden of restoring the symmetry of things falls heavily, while lending helping hands to the servants, whose

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## Etiquette of Family Life

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work is doubled by the careless selfishness of others.

Much influence of early training is lost by the years spent in colleges and schools, where for ten months out of the twelve the idea of the mutual ownership and responsibility of home is set aside. To young men this is especially the case, but girls fall largely into the same way of looking at things, though their pursuits do not bring in their train such palpable disorder and disregard for rules made for the benefit of all concerned.

On a summer day the delicate beauty and reposeful charm of a country house can be obliterated in half an hour by the arrival of the young people, who throw hats, caps, sticks, capes, bats, hither and thither, draw up the blinds, let in the sun, throw themselves on the lounges, order glasses and pitchers and whatever they want brought hither and thither, regardless of the quick-coming meal or the dainty neatness of their surroundings.

In winter the cosey den to which the tired father turns for his hour's rest before dinner may be made to resemble the dreary result of

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a dynamite explosion by the brief occupancy of his boys, who never cast a thought toward his comfort or his home-coming.

Where a sense of true regret and mortification will arise over the slightest delay or interruption caused in a house where a young man or woman is a guest, not so much as a word of apology will be vouchsafed at home when a meal has either been spoiled by waiting, or entirely re-served for the convenience of those who could have made the meal cheerful and orderly by a promptness which would have cost no effort. Just a remembrance of mother and home comfort, which would assuredly have been bestowed on a stranger hostess, would have saved much labor and given great pleasure.

To take the most comfortable seat, involving the pleasantest light whereby to read, or the coolest breeze on a hot day, and keep it unmoved if it is only one of the family who enters; to alter the temperature of the room without an appeal to others, who may dread more heat or cold, seems to be an inherent right in certain people's minds.

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## Etiquette of Family Life

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Why should the meal prepared in a parent's house, perhaps with especial thought of each individual preference, be allowed to be despised and rudely found fault with, so that a sense of general distaste and doubt arises in every one's mind? Why should questions of domestic order and economy be argued across the board which is meant to be the rallying-place of the family for physical comfort and loving intercourse? The simplest regard to natural civility should lead us to spare the mother and provider our unpleasant comments upon the food set before us; and the merest recognition of what makes a gathered family dear to each other should guide us to lend the aid of pleasant chat and kindly speech while seated at a dinner-table.

It would be hard to measure what good could be accomplished by agreeing not to find fault with what was provided until some other time, and a sincere determination to make our meal-times a source of pleasure to one another. We gather flowers to make the material board beautiful, and count it a legitimate use of our money to buy more liberally

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of what adds grace and attractiveness to our table than elsewhere in our houses ; we prepare in vain if a rude fault-finding spirit rules our family and differing opinions take opportunity to prolong discussion and increase irritation. One could hardly find a better bond to hold together the home circle ; one could scarcely hope to make the thought of home dearer ; there could be no cheerier memories of family life than of the pleasant hours spent around the well-remembered table, if by any pressure of persuasion or influence of affection we could prevail upon our children to use the same courtesy at home that makes them delightful guests elsewhere, and show the gracious deference to father and mother that they would surely give to any other host or hostess, however slightly regarded.

It is unquestionably true that we are so anxious that our children should love their homes that we sometimes allow them to make them very disagreeable places wherein to live, and in the endeavor that they shall be thoroughly comfortable and heirs of the kingdom,

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## Etiquette of Family Life

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let them subvert all the sweet, sound foundations laid for its endurance. If it were easy to find a remedy for this constantly increasing trouble, the eager mothers of the land would have found and used it, but the difficulty is a grave one and its root is deep. To be selfish is as natural as to live, and our well-bred young people in society are seeking success and admiration and praise while they gracefully live in other people's houses, but in their own homes they realize that the love that governs there, cannot be quenched and will not be lost to them, let them tax its faithfulness as they may.

Yet certainly much can be done by persistent, patient setting forth of the charm of happy family intercourse and by unfailing sweetness of temper and cheerfulness on the part of the heads of the house.

It has seemed to the writer that fathers co-operate less earnestly than they might, in demanding a more chivalric treatment of the mother who combines so many offices in one. In watching with increasing admiration the life of a neighboring family where courtesy

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marked the most trivial act of one toward another, it gradually became apparent that the marked deference shown the lovely mother sprang from direct imitation of her husband's unfailing tenderness toward her.

There were jolly athletic boys in patriarchal number in this household, and their home looked down a highway leading by a steep grade from the top to the bottom of a hill. Times without number have I seen this merry clan just at the foot of the hill doff all their caps and make the most gallant salutation; they had just caught sight of their mother's pleasant face on the outlook for their return. They met her eagerly, receiving her kiss with uncovered heads and standing aside that she might have precedence in entering her own door. They were boys to the heart's core, jubilant, restless, athletic, and merry, but in four years' close neighborhood I never heard a word of fraternal rudeness; I never saw a mean or selfish advantage taken, nor did any instance occur when they were not as considerate of each other and of home as if they were guests who tarried but a night. Some-

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thing besides natural tendencies brought about these results, and beyond the ordinary training of an educated Christian teaching, it seemed to me to come from the influence of their father's gentle courtesy to their mother.

If courtesy of manner has charm and most delightful influences, courtesy of speech goes yet further, and, alas ! rudeness of the tongue is remembered when the roughness of inconsideration is forgotten. The jeering laughter over some unavoidable error ; the quick ungracious contradiction, the implied ignorance, which is so common in the comments of the young upon their elders in these days, remain like the poisoned heads of arrows and cause a lasting sore. The sense of being too old-fashioned to seem distinguished, of being so little up to the innovations of the time as to seem ridiculous, of approaching senile dementia by adherence to theories and manners of their youth, are mental phases only too familiar to the head of many an American household to-day, where the "chaff" or graver criticism at her own dinner-table have made

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wounds in a mother's heart which will never entirely heal.

The aids against these sorrowful conditions lie in the parents' hands. First, there should be a rule as stern as any Median law under which rudeness and contradiction and discourtesy should be regarded as wrong in the same sense as any other punishable naughtiness in childhood, and by other fitting discipline as years go on — a rule by which the etiquette of home life should be as fixed and as necessary as in any other possible social relation, and its violations should bring results which can be felt and remembered; not a formula of stiff restrictions alien to real feeling, but by the enforcement of the rights of others and the adoption of that great law from which good manners form their own details — the law of self-forgetfulness and endeavor to make others happy. Bad manners and making things unpleasant at home come from pure selfishness, and it is cruel to let a child grow up selfishly.

The other help lies in the tactful, persistent showing — a lifelong demonstration — of the

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## Etiquette of Family Life

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happiness which comes from the living the life of a gentleman or a gentlewoman, whose courtesy and thoughtfulness in the world is drawn from the fountainhead at home and has ceased to be a polish and become an integral fibre of character.

### XIX

#### THE LAMENTABLE PUBLICITY OF MODERN LIFE

WE of the “old school” have long been sorrowful over the defenceless state of private life against the invasion of the world. It has seemed to us a grievous loss of sweetness and grace that our fair young daughters are, without ceremony or permission, described in the public prints ; their dress, their complexions, their pursuits and accomplishments made the subject of amusement to the world at large. It becomes intolerable when the story of their gentle, girlish love affairs is used to lengthen the column of “society notes,” without which a newspaper is called old-fashioned and uninteresting.

The mere mention of the names of women in paragraphs solely printed for public use, side by side with the record of crime or the horror of disaster, pushes them into the dusty

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## Lamentable Publicity of Modern Life

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arena of the world's strife, and changes their position from the sheltered dwellers in protecting homes to that of amusers of the vulgar crowd.

Guided by detailed descriptions, which are often minute enough for a passport, there are men and women whose chief delight at the opera is to try to pick out the pretty débütantes about whom they have read with strange eagerness, and to identify their mothers by the jewels of which they have heard with covetous ears. I well remember how the quiet, tender-hearted girls of that time pitied the lovely Alexandra when she first stepped upon British soil, because the English papers told of the kiss with which her royal lover greeted her, and that a poet made it the subject of a sonnet. The glory of marrying the heir of the English crown was fully appreciated, and the romance of her coming from the homely simplicity of her Danish court, chosen from out the royal women of the world for her loveliness and purity and unstained record to take the most enviable place in all Europe, was fascinating, but the honor seemed dearly

bought at such a price. That even the tender caress of her lover could not be her own was worse than to have been robbed of title and palace.

The “fierce light that beats upon a throne” was a thing to shrink from as a sort of torture, and was deemed a cause for kindly regret, as falling on one so fair and sweet, by girls whose simple lives at least were safe from the staring crowd and the rude criticism of the rabble. Of whose life can this now be truly said? Who is sure that by to-morrow she will not see that the friends who broke bread with her to-day are discussed as freely and as carelessly as if they had played leading rôles at the theatres where men and women paid for the privilege of seeing them?

What the fascination is in personal gossip about people unknown to us is a problem. That it exists in great strength universally, no one can doubt. There are people who even entertain one with items of intelligence concerning the wives and children of distinguished men, as one naturalist would tell another of the absurdities or the wonders of new-found

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animals. What is there in the fact that Admiral So-and-So's wife is a very nervous woman, or Senator —'s daughter has a fine voice, which makes it pleasant to tell and to hear? It will remain a mystery to the end of time, for it is not the peculiarity of a lower stratum inspecting a higher, or of the uninitiated seeing the hidden — women of the same social condition are quite as deeply interested about those who are only separated from them by the accident of place.

Nor are men outside of or proof against the charm. Many a husband tells with animation to his highly amused wife, the story of family peculiarities and individual errors which has served to kill time as he journeyed home in the up-town train. It is a universal human trait, which does not tend to make us more proud of ourselves.

Time was when the too free use of a young girl's name, though coupled with the most ardent praise, called forth the quick resentment of her friend, and duels have been fought because a toast was given in a mess-room or a public gathering of men, though the

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hearers were but asked to pledge her health or drink to the supremacy of her beauty.

To-day, if they will, they may learn, after the stock list has been scanned and the market understood, what the bride of yesterday received from her lover, what amount her father put in her purse, how she bought her wedding gown, and where the wine at the wedding-breakfast came from. They may even learn (I quote) "that the fair fiancée has wisely decided not to longer delay her marriage, for her younger sister will be a far more popular and beautiful woman than she ever was."

So far we have only thought of the rude unveiling of what is lovable and beautiful and happy ; but there is a far deeper and more extraordinary phase of publicity which is wounding our domestic life and cruelly exposing the most sacred and guarded moments of family experience. Recently the retired life of an old and dignified gentleman has been invaded by inquiries from nine out of every ten of the daily newspapers in our own and adjacent cities, concerning the innocence

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## Lamentable Publicity of Modern Life

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or guilt of an erring son. Not one word that was wrung from him has been concealed, and not one word was printed by authority or with a shadow of permission. Where is the weak point in our civilization through which such an outrage can be perpetrated?

And in that innermost shrine, where the peace and stability of family life are kept guarded by mutual love and honor, and the strength of indissoluble union is fed at the springs of undying respect — is there no force which can keep its golden door shut? The hour seems at hand that shall even tear this open, and the kiss that the Prince gave Alexandra be no longer a thing to talk about. What is there in the marital happiness or unhappiness of any American citizen which needs to be “announced by authority”?

Must we, while living in palaces and enlarging our retinues, suffer also the penalties of rank? And when the — alas! — too common grief of disagreement and division, born largely of our artificial and superficial lives, enters men’s homes, is there no way to hide the wound and to keep the sore from the

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shame of examination under the many-lensed microscope of public curiosity? Is there any far-off reason why the misery of unhappy husbands and wives must become public property? Is there no means by which the law of a Christian land can stretch its ægis over the unfortunate children of such sad parents and protect them from the declaration of parental shame? Is the disease so deeply rooted that those chiefly concerned in these broken homes cannot gather strength enough to say, "My sorrow is my own," and to save the young from believing that the vows they pledge and the hopes they cherish are but like other things after all, "of the earth, earthy," and subject to a ruin of which they daily read details which would be heartrending if disgust at their public revelation did not quench sympathy?

Once there existed an unwritten code which made the mother of children sacred, even in time of her own misconduct, to their father. A husband might eat out his own heart in the despair of his bitter disappointment and the defeat of his life, but no man might mention her who bore his name in his presence with

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disrespect. In times and conditions of early yet barbarous romanticism, a husband's hand might end his erring wife's life, but he did it secretly and with silence. Men and women have waited until the highest point of refinement and ultra-civilization had been reached before they publish the record of family discord and give to the idle reader of common news the zestful morsel of their private wrongs as a tid-bit.

And what has become of the enduring patience, the stern self-suppression with which women were made strong to live silently under great wrongs, rather than expose their children to a world's pity, and risk the division of their young lives between differing parents? I knew a woman to whom her husband never spoke except officially for twenty terrible years, who ruled his house in lovely dignity and kept the misery in her brave heart that she might watch over her children, and let them go forth into the world without opportunity of disgraceful comment regarding their parents. At the head of her well-ordered table, the courtly master of the

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house addressed her as he did his guests, regarding the food of which she would partake, and in other places gave her the respectful treatment due any stranger under his protection, but never in all those years broke the silence otherwise. Not once did she complain, nor confide the truth even to her sisters. If she was a humiliated and deposed wife, she carried her burden gallantly and took no one into her confidence. To-day her butler would have sold her story to the highest bidder, and she would have sat under a battery of staring eyes whenever she took her beautiful daughter into public places.

O ! for some power to rouse in those who, being gifted with influence and distinction, lead the public mind, a revival of that reverence for the sanctity of home that should cover its joys and sorrows with the shields of reticence and self-respect. Surely there must be some way to find protection for what is dearer than life to any man or woman, and to preserve young lives from being subjected to such lowering discussion. Is it inevitable that henceforth a man's roof must lack protection

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## Lamentable Publicity of Modern Life

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to those who dwell beneath it? Because the populace like true stories of real lives, are we obliged to afford them amusement?

Somewhere deep down there must exist both a lack of reverence for the sanctity of family life and an indifference to what makes a home, or these things could never be. With all the rest of the great struggle to live as kings and princes do, there must abide a desire to be "in the eye of the public," as the phrase goes, and a belief that in some way it is a token of greatness. And if this be true of any of us, we have found a root hard to eradicate. From it will continue to grow an evil influence which will touch even the simple lives of those who give no reason for this hard treatment except that they are fair, and bright, and beautiful. When the few who are notable afford no "news" (!) the simplest, most modest life must be pressed into the service of the "society column." May time develop some way in which to revive the old traditions of gentlemen and gentlewomen, and give refuge to those whose lives are too sincerely simple to make food for sensation!

XX

MORAL RESPONSIBILITY OF  
ENTERTAINING

BEYOND the scruples of some careful mother who dreads lest there may be too much wine for her young men guests, or the conscientious calculation of expense on the part of a young wife, it is not an every-day thing to have any debate in the minds of host or hostess as to the moral aspect of such hospitality as they may choose to offer.

Yet there is a serious responsibility appertaining to every opening of our doors to our guests, and not a little opportunity for good or evil. It was the sad verdict of a neighborhood that sat in judgment upon the household of a public man gone not long since to his account, that "no young man was ever intimate with the family without being the worse for it." The card-table emptied their purses, the well-stocked

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## Moral Responsibility of Entertaining

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sideboard fired their brains. The scattered and disintegrated family circle is to-day an object-lesson.

And there is also a fundamental principle regarding hospitality which we are all very apt to lose sight of: to contribute in some sort to the cheerfulness of our community is undoubtedly a duty, and a house closed against its neighbors is not the home of a good citizen. The “give and take” of social bargaining can hardly be honored with the lovely name of hospitality; it comes rather under the head of a pleasant commercial interchange. The truly hospitable door stands always on the latch, the spirit of the house is the generous intention to welcome with cordial readiness all those who find pleasure in lifting it.

All the sweet overflow of feeling, which calls friends and companions in to congratulate the old or young who have come to some “red-letter day” of rejoicing, and so cement friendship by sympathy, comes from the fountain-head of genuine hospitality. The making of a family anniversary into an occa-

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sion of joy to a neighborhood binds our lives one to another with great and beautiful strength. The brilliant, benignant gentlewoman whose birthdays became fête-days as her honored years grew greater and greater was like a magnetic current drawing her whole social circle together by their unity in her.

To open one's own doors, or the wider ones of some public caravansary, in order to give a great display of wealth that shall dazzle and insure supremacy, is wholly outside of the remotest stretch of what we could fairly designate as being hospitable. Doubtless it answers its purpose famously and attains its end ; this lavish splendor and profuse distribution of luxuries rarely fails to gain its reward. But it is purely a means of self-exploitation for a purpose, and is so understood by all the social world. It is surely something very far away from that sweet and noble practice which we define as the "reception and entertainment of strangers and guests without reward, in a spirit of liberality and kindness." What responsibility lies on the

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shoulders of these lavish hosts in their ultimate influence on life in our country, time and the next generation can better tell than we may at present decide.

The making all our entertainments centre in some material advantage to the guests lowers the tone of social life. That we should desire to provide with care and liberality for those whom we ask to come to our houses is a matter of course, but that we should hesitate to bring congenial people together because we can be neither magnificent nor wonder-making hosts, robs life of much of its good cheer and sets up a false standard for a people whose intent is supposed to be the maintenance of republican simplicity and the exaltation of a man above his belongings.

Especially is there a grave and much-neglected duty allied to what we do in this way for children and young people. A child comes from many, nay most, parties laden as heavily as were the Hebrews in leaving Egypt of old. His first words on reaching home are no longer the formula of the old

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days, "Oh, we did have such fun!" but running to his mother he cries, "Just see what I've got!"

And when a girl standing just at the borderland of womanhood calls together her school friends to lunch with her, and we look in upon that charming sight, a bevy of sweet, fresh, young women gathered around a delicately ornamented table, it startles the eyes which with the century are growing old to see two or three wineglasses at each dainty plate, and the mind nurtured in a different atmosphere is alarmed to realize that the rosy lips of girls of seventeen part with ready familiarity to enjoy good wine, and find an exhilaration to which they are accustomed in the champagne without which the meal to them would seem niggardly. Happily, the sequence of early dependence on such stimulants does not come within our province, and yet, more happily, this custom is not universal, but it is unquestionably very general, and the moral aspect of this part of such entertainments is a thing not lightly to be passed by.

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## Moral Responsibility of Entertaining

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Two things seem quite plain to us students of home and its duties and pleasures: It is not a true home out of which no influence goes to cheer and gladden the world, and it is not an honorable home which provides anything that can hurt the body or souls of its guests, or which fails to make its hospitality a source of wholesome joy to mind as well as body.

I am not writing a disguised lecture on total abstinence, but without any covering veil whatever I would desire to speak of the great responsibility laid upon us as to the methods and times of serving wines, and as to the unrestrained freedom with which it is now left to the choice of very young people, or served in fatally large quantities at the entertainments of the rich.

There is a charming unity in the belief and practice of mankind in regard to the tie engendered by the shelter of a roof and the breaking of bread in a man's house. The salt of the Arab cannot be tasted without binding him to become your protector while you abide with him, and in the most civilized

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countries of the world, he who partakes of hospitality and afterwards disregards the honor of his host is counted unworthy of esteem among his fellows. To sit at a man's table and later use his weaknesses or ignorances to point a jest is not an unheard-of thing, but it is a shameful one. I once saw a courtly old gentleman suddenly interrupt a conversation between two gay young men who were laughing noisily over the lack of conventional "good form" in a certain new-rich man, by asking: "I beg your pardon, but did I understand that you were dining with this man last night?" Surprised, they answered readily: "Yes; it was the drollest thing you ever saw in your life." "In my day," thundered out the elder man, "to ridicule a person who had extended his hospitality to you was considered an outrage!" Two more astonished youngsters never lived.

The obverse of the picture shows the value of the genuine exchange of such courtesies as effectually bind us to each other. It is well that children shall look upon their invitations to their comrades not alone as sources of grati-

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## Moral Responsibility of Entertaining

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fication to themselves, but as a right way to express their affection, and even be induced to use some self-denial to make the anticipated visit pleasant to their guests ; to put off a promised treat until it can be shared, or save a dainty until the friend arrives.

We make at once too great and too little effort in entertaining ; we strain every resource to produce beautiful effects and set delicacies upon our tables, but we do too little towards giving any lasting pleasure. We use too much elaboration, and so make the coming of a few friends to dinner a troublesome matter, and stop our provision for them too abruptly with the item of their food. There is a model club in our city which, in the private homes of its members, gives to society at large an ideal of what constitutes a perfect form of entertainment. Its limited number is a safeguard to its continuity, but there is no reason why its delightful, reasonable evenings might not be imitated in every neighborhood where fifty or a hundred people wish at once to give each other pleasure, and at the same time provide amusement that shall leave an

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enduring gratification behind. The individual stamp of each host is upon the character of what he offers his guests, and yet in this variety there is the unity of high purpose and delightful cultivation.

The good Book bids us to be “given to hospitality”; with a strange perversity I have of late, under pressure of certain facts, kept twisting other of its sacred words to say, “and let your hospitality be without dissimulation.” It would be better for my argument if these words were really to be found in a place of such commanding authority, but of the need of such persuasion we can none of us be doubtful. Inviting people whom we do not care to meet, to accept a welcome we dislike to give, is a detriment to any true social life and a dishonor to our homes. Social insincerity is said to be a social necessity; if this be so it were well that we should take to the deserts and live apart from men.

There is a sadly neglected point in the ordering of our households that is of great importance to our children. They should be induced to take a cheerful and unselfish share

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in the welcoming and caring for such guests as are not agreeable additions to the family circle—the deaf, to whom it is trying to talk; the aged, who need especial care, the best seat by the fireside, and a thousand small attentions which the young ought properly to pay; the semi-invalid, for whose sake the piano must be closed early and the doors closed gently; even the irritable, who easily take offence.

There are very few young hearts which, if properly approached, cannot be moved to pity for those who are infirm and made to feel a sense at least of satisfaction in being helpful. It is a droll evidence of inherent self-love when we discover how being important takes away the sting of restraint. As soon as a child, especially a girl, can feel that she is of use and can do anything better than some one else, labor is light. “Old Mr. Jones says he can hear you more easily than he can any one else,” will suffice to keep a clear childish voice amusing the old man for an hour. If these yet plastic natures gain the idea that it is a part of life’s pleasant duty to

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make their homes places of rest and good cheer, and that the dispensing of heartfelt and inspiring hospitality, which shall enlarge the world's fountains of refreshment and pleasure, is an integral quality of the best family life, they will not readily lose sight of these fundamental principles in later years.

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## Friendship and Consolation of a Garden

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### XXI

#### FRIENDSHIP AND CONSOLATION OF A GARDEN

I HAVE often thought what a beneficial effect it would have on the sum of human experience in our country and latitude, if keepers of summer refuges for heat-driven citizens rented small gardens with their suites of rooms. How much it would relieve the tendency to talk gossip on the verandas and relax the tension when social crises were at hand ! What a joyful change from the routine of breakfast, and seeing the stage start, and settling down to fancy work and unamusing chat with uncongenial people, to hurry out to the bit of border assigned to our care and see how far the rose-bud, discovered yesterday, had unfolded its calyx, or the stalk of pale lilies had progressed toward maturity.

We look on flowers too much in the light of their sentimental connections, and city

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folk are apt to love them as gifts from friends, or ornaments to their feasts, or decorative additions to the beauty of their homes, or even as the crowning touch to a perfect toilette. We have no chance to understand the close friendship a heart, intimate with their loveliness, forms for them ; nor do we realize the comfort which they give to those who are comfortless from other sources.

In some sort the response of a growing plant to the tenderness and watchful care of its owner is like that of a sweet-natured child — it droops and we give it shade and water, and returning at evening finds its head raised, its leaves spread out eagerly to draw in breath, and, perhaps, can see a perceptible increase in its height. Do this twice or thrice, and you will begin to love the weakling, and your thoughts will recur to it when you are away from it ; if it is sultry, you will fear for it ; if the rain falls gently, you will remember that it will be refreshed and be glad.

The incomparable history of what “ Pic-

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ciola" was to her imprisoned friend is in no sense an exaggeration, and we have only to take our lonely and burdened hearts to any quiet place, or even to a window in which we can watch and personally protect and care for a blossoming plant, to learn what is the truth concerning the soul of man and the life of God's mute messengers.

In thinking of what one may send an invalid or those shut within four changeless walls, it is of infinitely more use to choose an immature and budding plant, or a bulb just ready to rise from its time of germinating in darkness, than to expend large sums in cut flowers. To count the buds, to watch the unfolding leaves, to see the up-shooting of a flower stalk, is not only a new delight for every morning, but is a daily gospel of good cheer. Growth, expansion, color, life, each speak of possibly returning health, and tell of vitality that is not readily quenched.

Last winter a few lily-of-the-valley roots planted in a wide-mouthed earthen pot were to a feeble woman like a visit from the very "Genius of Spring." The snow lay thick

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and white outside, the roads were barely broken and desolately untrodden, there was illness within and isolation without; but she of the lily-pot carried her pets from window to window, following the sun, and could hardly resist caressing the frail leaves, which, pale and translucent, almost like the folded wings of a katydid, rose from the dull moss just far enough to shield the up-thrust lily-stalk. For three weeks they were her only guests, and satisfied her heart, standing at last in smiling clusters of white, while the unfolding leaves hurried to reach up to them, exhaling the subtle wood-odor peculiar to their tribe. No one could disbelieve in the return of all delightful out-of-door joys while he stood a witness of what warmth and light can do.

If one is vigorous enough really to work in a garden — weed and straighten and trim and cut off seed vessels and stir the earth about the growing plants — the chief danger lies in its becoming a mild form of mania, mind and body refusing to perform other duties. There is, I am positive, some pri-

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mæval affinity between the hand of man and Mother Earth, which makes it a delight to touch and handle it, from the fascinating influence of mud pies upon children, to the sense of supreme satisfaction in patting down some good potting soil about a favorite geranium.

The raising of a few seedlings in a sunny window and then "pricking them out" in your early spring border is accompanied by the same keen sense of pleasure that comes from the use of creative power, and has the added charm of mystery. What will they develop?

I have elsewhere urged the educational influence of gardening upon children's characters—not the possession of tools and a patch of soil, but the systematic regular care of growing things. Most earnestly would I plead that mind-weary, heart-heavy women would try the effect of the same discipline upon themselves. Half-a-dozen tea-roses, with their need of care, their many enemies to combat, their generous return of blossom and fragrance, the uncertainty whether they

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will yield a constant or a remittent crop, the delight of seeing the soft bronze leaves swiftly develop and lay bare the long graceful buds, will drive away a thousand "blue devils," give you an opportunity to bless your friends with always welcome gifts, and strengthen your faith in the final triumph of all good things. By the time the season is over, you will have found that these slender bushes have exercised patience, roused both hope and fear, awakened joy, and given birth to an almost ludicrous sense of satisfaction.

The languid interest which books arouse in minds enfeebled by pain or exhausted by emotion is as nothing in comparison with this health-giving tonic derived from gardening. One reason of the efficacy of the employment arises from its being one in which the experimenter can work alone. There are phases of human experience when doing things in common, even with our very dearest friends, is practically impossible, and when talking proves more exhausting than breaking stones. One cannot be lonely in a garden which is ours to cultivate and watch over. The lilies

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## Friendship and Consolation of a Garden

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call us to enjoy their stately beauty; the mignonette draws us down to its hardy, faithful delicacy by such a caressing, wooing appeal; the asters bristle and hold up their smart heads like bright scholars awaiting their prizes; the heliotrope turns its sun-loving leaves toward the heat and bids us expect a rich banquet to our senses.

We can hardly keep from calling them by name as we pass them in review. Some have seemed so ungrateful, some so perverse; the fiendish worms and devouring armies of larvæ-laying creatures are so defiantly hurtful, and we have to work so hard to save life, that we find ourselves all at once maternal in tenderness, skilful as surgeons and patient as nurses, and all the while the fresh air blows about our tired temples, and the wonder of divine order and beauty unveils itself, and we have neither heard a disturbing word, nor felt a touch upon the ever sore spot which mistaken human kindness strives to soothe, nor been forced to say what we did not mean, nor hide anything. And we go back to our chamber with the spicy flavor of the geranium

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## Home Thoughts

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clinging to our fingers and the sweet breath of a rose exhaling from the bud on our breast. If it be that we have only taken a choking weed from its rude grasp of some little struggling plant, we have saved a life and done some good in our little world.

Stately and lordly gardens are indeed gifts to the world wherewith rich men are wise to enrich the general wealth of joy meant for mankind ; but the friendly garden, the garden of consolation, is better to be small and not splendid in any way. All the sources of real happiness in our lives tell the same story : size, greatness, immensity, numbers, millions, are not the foundation stones. “A poor thing,” it may seem, “but mine own” explains its value, and Touchstone was truly an expositor of human happiness when he took Audrey by the hand. A hundred books well read ; half-a-dozen pictures dearly prized ; a home so small and simple that love can compass its necessities ; a garden that lies easily under the hand of its owner and yields its fruit and blossom to the one fostering hand, are worth all the great collections, and gal-

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## Friendship and Consolation of a Garden

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leries, and palaces, and gardener-ruled conservatories which the earth can boast. I do not think there is a greater humiliation than finding that your head-gardener, proud of his apprenticeship at Charlottenberg, has locked your rose-house and taken off the keys. Whose roses are they that are behind the glass, waiting to be perfect enough to be exhibited? No friendliness and tender comradeship to be thus found. For the joy of the thing, a border in a back-yard beside a city wall is worth all Chatsworth, with Kew Gardens thrown in.

If a country home pertains to a family, and things can be planned to become permanent sources of delight, and recurring springtimes show that trees and shrubs, roses and lilacs, are growing as the children grow, then friendship ripens into love, and the nature must indeed be stolid that does not enter into the life of its faithful, embowering dependents. But since this is the privilege of the few, let us make for ourselves a bit of garden everywhere we go, even if our limitations reach the narrowness of a window-box.

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In those days of penance which household or personal necessities force us to spend occasionally in the city, the mere sight of a geranium in a tomato-can on a fire-escape makes one feel a sense of relief regarding the poor dwellers in the tenements past which the elevated railways carry us so swiftly. As row after row of dingy, distressing-looking windows disclose the dirt and poverty within, a sinking sensation of deep pity enters the heart. But when a glimpse of green appears — a few “scarlet runners” on parti-colored strings climbing by the sash, a feeble morning-glory opening its blue eyes amid the grime — it always heralds better things; the baby looking out is pale, but clean; the pane has been washed; often a bit of white, really white, curtain screens the interior family-life from the passing eyes. The blossoming plant has done its work, and there is an attempt to live up to its beauty.

There are many doors thrown open to those from whom the present joy of life seems to have gone out. “See here and here,” cry the voices of the happy, “here

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## Friendship and Consolation of a Garden

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you will be amused and learn to forget ; here you will find diversion." I would fain open the gate of a garden and say enter where beauty and peace dwell, under the divine protection of Him who in the beginning, we are told, chose such a place as the best environment in which man and his consort could dwell.

### XXII

#### MUSIC AS A FAMILY BOND

**T**HERE is an interesting and very suggestive picture representing Sebastian Bach's family at morning prayer, in which, after reading the title, one looks about vainly for kneeling figures and books of devotion. Bach sits at the piano playing, but his head is turned toward a group of young children, who, dressed in very quaint little costumes, are standing near and singing. There is no solemnity, though manifest sincerity, in the scene. They are singing as naturally as the birds sing, and it is evidently a part of their lives. Their "prayer" is just an outburst of earnest, hearty song, and there is a genuineness in their whole aspect which makes you realize that to them music is as spontaneous as speech.

Even where there is no great talent in any individual member of a family, the general education of its members to sight reading

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## Music as a Family Bond

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affords room for very great pleasure, and makes a bond of peculiar strength between them. The time and trouble of learning an instrument is in no way essential to this result, though, of course, everything that enriches the concert and adds variety tends to increase its value. There are very few people who have not voice enough to sing in a glee or join in any form of chorus, and the cost either in money or in time spent in learning to do so correctly is very small. And who shall measure the pleasure?

The mother who allows her music to be lost in the busy early years of her children's lives deprives them of a great source of happiness. Even in babyhood the little face lights up, and the feet, unable to stand, kick joyfully in response to any marked rhythmic measure vigorously played. Better than much applause of her girlhood is the unity and sympathy a mother's musical ability enkindles in her household. The half-romping dance at twilight, when the "children's hour" closes the day; the jolly reel or waltz which enlivens the children's party; the life and animation

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which come into the school or college boys' chorus as a cheery mother plays a vigorous accompaniment to their noisy song, makes her one of them at once. I hardly know a prettier picture than that of a mother, bearing the inevitable mark of the years through which she has watched over and borne them on her heart, sitting among her boys and their friends, full of ready sympathy with their college associations, and merrily keeping them in time and tune by her skilled fingers. There is an insensibly refining influence, no matter how loud the chorus or how noisy the pattering of the time-keeping feet, in her gentle presence among their stalwart young figures, and if she wins the commendation of being "a jolly little mother," she has them in thrall. If the music rises to a higher plane, and there be any real talent or true appreciation among the youngsters, then, of course, comes in the added aid of the innate elevation which is inherent in the music itself. Then the mother has a help at hand second only to those which are directly appertaining to religion.

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## Music as a Family Bond

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Large hospitality is, of course, of immense use in keeping our children at home and away from unknown temptations, and if young people realize that in a certain house they can always find music, that they will be encouraged to learn any new popular song, to practise any pet chorus from the last comic opera, to dance, if they so desire, to the well-played measure of their favorite waltz, they will surely come often to its hospitable doors, and rank their welcome among their chief pleasures.

It seems to me a great injury to close the piano in houses where sorrow and bereavement have come. Youth cannot long grieve, at least healthful, buoyant youth, and there is no reason to wish that it should, and a silent house is never a wholesome one to live in.

Where, as in most German households, the children learn, without much coercion or trouble, various instruments, the lovely ensemble is inspiring to every one and the interest unending; but in our country the shorter, easier way of learning to sing together and to be able to read new music correctly is

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the more practical way of obtaining unity of purpose and action. This attainment is so easy and so inexpensive that it ought to be a part of every child's education. It is to give him a life-long source of delight.

Part-singing has also the great advantage of being an amusement in which both sexes can join with equal pleasure, and brings them together under the happiest and most innocent influences.

And to the tired and the weary elders, a favorite song, or a wordless poem just suited to their needs, is sometimes more efficacious as a comforter and rest than any other form of relaxation. The old dream of their youth; the man too tired to think receives a refreshment akin to that which nature gives; and the sorrowful are soothed as they cannot be by the tenderest human speech.

And to the often weary-hearted wife and mother, carrying unspoken her burden of heavy care and anxiety, it is well worth while to keep up her music for her own sake. In it she has always a responsive friend, sad when she is sad, merry when she is merry,

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## Music as a Family Bond

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always of her own especial mood. It is always ready for her confidence, and is a friend who never betrays it.

Where there is an unmusical temperament at the head of the house a little consideration is likely soon to awaken his interest and eventually his liking. The man who cannot tell what charm musical people find in their art, yet thoroughly enjoys seeing his children happy and lovingly content at their own fireside, laughs with his boys when "Old Nassau" or "Fair Harvard's" charms are vociferously praised, and delights in seeing his graceful little daughters dance. If he is not bored by hours of piano practice, or forced to keep silence while enigmatic compositions are played to his uncomprehending ears, he soon learns to enjoy what draws the young people about him and keeps his home cheerful and content.

In older and sterner days, nearer the times of Puritan rule, I have heard men object to their sons learning to play any instrument or to cultivate their voices, on the ground that it led a young man to neglect other

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studies, and made him too popular with the gayer men at college or in his social set. But in our present-day world surely that cannot be reasonably urged, since the tendencies of men's amusements are to so much more absorbing and more dangerous forms of social gayety that there can be no ground for the old objection. The glee or the banjo clubs happily displace poker playing and pool contests.

In country homes musical families have great advantages over those in whose drawing-rooms the closed piano is only an important piece of furniture. Especially is this so on the long and often restless Sundays. It has become an exception to find any objection made to good music as a part of the rest and enjoyment of the seventh day, and it keeps in quiet good humor many a young party who find no pleasure in reading and miss the active sports of the week.

Rubinstein said that America was afflicted with the "piano disease," and surely he was not harsh in his judgment. With an intense love for and belief in music and its influence

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## Music as a Family Bond

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for good in our home lives, I deprecate most earnestly the universal and irrational teaching of the piano to children who have no talent. They need not spend one fourth of their study hours and hundreds of dollars in the study of an instrument in the use of which they will never excel, in order to gain a knowledge of and love for the art of music. Half the time and a tenth of the money will give them the power to read vocally at sight, and teach them how to listen to music so as to have their senses gratified and their minds alive to the technical beauty of what they hear. The world would receive a great gift of enjoyment if it became a part of our school education to learn what was beautiful and noble and great in music. Many a weary hour of hopeless scale-playing would be happily, nay mercifully, changed into the practical demonstration of the loveliness of an art unattainable by the pupils to whom nature had denied the gift of manual expression.

The brief time needed to learn the notes of the keyboard and sufficient facility to play simple dances and accompaniments is doubt-

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less well spent, as it renders any young person so helpful in all informal gatherings; but to try to make a "performer" of every young girl who is receiving a liberal education, simply because it is a recognized accomplishment, is to put her through a mild form of useless torture to no possible end. Give the world all the music possible, and fit every young ear and heart to enjoy it, but do not hope that one in five hundred can play a Beethoven sonata because she practises it. It is a recognized fact that a knowledge of color and the use of a brush cannot make a painter, but it is not generally admitted that it takes more than patience and familiarity with the keyboard to make a pianist.

Every home can be "bound about with golden chains" of music, without its inmates attempting to be virtuosi.

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## Responsibility for Influence

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### XXIII

#### RESPONSIBILITY FOR INFLUENCE

MISS AGNES REPLIER'S very clever essay on the "Eternal Feminine" is a unique contribution to the philosophical discussion of the qualifications of woman as distinctly intended to make her mentally correlative and never synonymous with man. In these days our daughters are launched into the world much as professional men would be did their outfit consist of text-books of which they had not learned the use. Every embellishment, every accomplishment, every mental equipment, every bodily skill of athletic play, is sedulously made familiar to them ; they are indeed " splendidly furnished ; " but to how few is it taught that they are to be the strongest restraining and purifying power of the social world !

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No one can shut out from a young girl's consciousness that she is beautiful if the wondrous gift is really hers. Why should she not be made to understand that having it, she has been intrusted with that which has had power to move even the rulers and kingdoms of the earth, and that in the lowest estimate possible of her influence she has "a government upon her shoulders"?

We of a generation passing out of sight say constantly that the world is richer in art and splendor, in luxury and resource, than when we were young; we know that life is fuller, that things we never dreamed of gladden and make life easier materially and more worth living intellectually. Yes, these are trite truths, but no thoughtful woman believes that the general aim is as elevating, as conservative, that the influence against dissipation and the coarser grain of life's converse and action is as large, or as strong, as it was in their young day. There is no desire to bring back the formality and stilted stiffness of Miss Austen's heroes and heroines; it takes all her charm of genius and humor to make them

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## Responsibility for Influence

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real men and women to us. But between these and the unfortunate freedom of to-day there was a time when the homage paid to loveliness and youth and beauty meant that a man should come with clean lips, chivalric deference, and restrained speech into the society of women he admired.

Can there be a doubt that if it were a part of every girl's preparation for her life in the world to understand that she could help men to lead better lives, to have higher aims, to think nobler thoughts, she would not respond to her calling, and be proud of her possibilities? Continually girls are warned that this is not customary, and that is not good form, and that chaperones and various conventional proprieties are indispensable; but is it instilled into them that far above conventions of every sort there is an unwritten law to which they are bound to be obedient, a law that is to link the better life with their regard?

Benevolence and philanthropy are at high-water mark; humanitarian activity is really astonishing among women. Their work is a marvel of unselfishness, and, for the major

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part, of steadfastness to self-imposed duty. Tenement-house darkness and dirt, danger of infection or rudeness, fatigue of body, or tax upon sympathy, do not disturb them at their work. "What the girls are doing" is indeed an astonishing record, but it is all directed toward a lower stratum, and in large part to the relief of poverty and its attendant distresses.

That because she is a woman, and more especially because she is either a very beautiful or charming woman, she has a mission attached to her endowment does not seem to be one of the actively accepted beliefs of the new era. All sorts of schemes, some of them built on most untenable and baseless grounds, are aired in every varying atmosphere by which women are to help each other to power, to "recognition" (word of truly nineteenth century growth); every day brings to light new combinations by which, shoulder to shoulder, women are to fight for "rights," or wrangle for privilege and make endless endeavor to come into the arena with men and "fight it out."

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## Responsibility for Influence

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All this time, lying neglected and forgotten alike by those whom we call the "butterfly class" and by the women who are too "deadly in earnest" to pause to take breath, lies that great purpose of the God who created them, that their inalienable power should be used for the help of men of their own rank and sphere.

"Eternal" indeed is that other something, not of intellect, or fascination, or beauty, which is the feminine element in her nature, and toward which man turns for inspiration of better things. Chaff about lack of reasoning and reasonableness, about the exaltation of trifles and trivial interests, about the soothing of a grief with a new bonnet, and the putting out of wrathful fires with a check, has its basis of truth ; there is enough such fire in human homes to account for the smoke. But let evidences of puerility and untrained impulse pile up as they may, man's heart turns to woman for rest, counsel, uplifting appeal, and stirring incentive to come out of the mire and walk in ways made firm by truth and clean by purity and single-heartedness.

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Words may multiply concerning the exactions, the biased judgments, the unseeing persistence of wives and mothers, and much bitterness may point their analysis of feminine character among young men wounded by coquetry or maimed by the falseness of a flirt; but in the end, as surely as the sea obeys its ordained ebb and flow, and comes back true to the beach it has some time left bare, man's heart rests not until, in some of its varying relations, as mother, wife, or love, he finds the strongest influence of his nature through a woman's help.

One of the ways in which this influence is profaned in these last days of our strange, transforming century, is the liberty of conversation. Weary of the morning's skimming of the journals of the day, in which to do evil seems to be the allotted task of all humanity, a man finds the latest horror the subject of the family chat on his return to his home. There is no effort made, no trouble taken to keep one place, one hour of the day free from the wretchedness of the world's sin and misery. The room must be

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well ventilated ; a pure air, full of healthful oxygen, must be free to vitalize the blood : but for the mental atmosphere, what occupies the thronged city, and stirs the passions and horrors of men, may suffice without disapproval.

“ Ignorance is not innocence,” nor yet is the knowledge of evil, which no man can hinder, possibly to be confounded with loss of sensitive delicacy and clear-eyed purity of thought ; but the general discussion of subjects involving the analysis of crime and the questions of morality, common to present society, lowers the tone of all concerned.

It has been the writer’s personal experience during the past year to hear animated arguments at a public table, between young married and unmarried men and women, of excellent social standing, as to the morality or immorality of books and plays involving the deepest questions of life and the relations of the sexes.

“ The ‘jeune fille’ is a forgotten personage. There is no longer any one answering to her whom the French so called,” said a

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woman of the world to me. Perhaps society is not impoverished by the loss of her, who, being a woman in years, was allowed to be a child in simplicity. Yet it would be refreshing occasionally, to old eyes at least, to be in the company of one whose trust in honor and sincerity was without fear, who knew not the terrors and pitfalls of life, and who had yet the lost art of blushing in her gentle list of accomplishments.

Years ago, a young matron heading her own table, around which a very "swell" set of men were gathered, was startled by the loud statement of her guest of honor that he had spent the day in the court-room where a scandalous divorce case, involving the honor of a distinguished man and a hitherto much-loved woman, was then being tried. The hostess caught, in the uplifted voice and preparatory clearing the throat, her guest's intention to narrate what he had seen and heard. She gave a startled glance toward her husband, whose answering look was one of serious annoyance, and then, with all the courteous entreaty of a voice too

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pleading to be offensive, she said: "Forgive me, General, but it is sorrowful enough to know it is going on; please don't talk of it."

Though robbed of his proposed position of authorized reporter, and falling back to the common level of conversation, the General, with a new deference in his manner, said: "I beg your pardon; I forgot that you might not be interested."

A quick-witted woman need never be at a loss for the means by which to carry the conversation into whatsoever channel she will; no gentlewoman need fear that she will not gain personally as well as do good by a steadfast resistance of the drift of unwholesome talk in her house, and especially about her table. And though a young girl may find herself in an uncomfortable dilemma, being harassed by dread of appearing to put on "superior airs," she will in the end have achieved something for herself, something for her fellow-women, and much for the young men about her, by plainly and definitely showing her displeasure when it is deserved.

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A revolutionizing power as to all that changes the “order of our day” lies in feminine hands, through the use of what is distinctively hers. Through no other means can amusement be kept within bounds, compliment be repressed into more delicate expression, conversation be led into higher yet not less lively channels, and men be made to know that to win favors they must wear the tokens of knightly purity and courage. It is not through her strong arm, nor her mathematical honors, nor her admittance to the bar, that a woman can elevate her race; by her adherence to the true, the spiritual, and the uplifting, will she make a refuge for the men of her time.

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## The Education of the Citizen

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### XXIV

#### THE EDUCATION OF THE CITIZEN

THE instability of public opinion, and the vehement outbursts of crude ill-considered speech which we are growing more and more subject to with every added year of our country's existence, are evidences which cannot be misunderstood of the ignorance of the mass of our citizens regarding both the fundamental principles underlying our government and of the personal obligation laid on us to uphold them. We, and especially we women, if interested in public events and changes, talk very warmly and fluently about "our country and other countries," yet fail to grasp the important and irreconcilable difference between the relations of the governed to the government, in a monarchical country and our own.

While we women of the United States have at present little desire to thrust ourselves

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into the arena of political strife and controversy, and no wish to emulate those famous disturbers of the public peace for whom blood-stained France created the title of "Citizeness," we are yet gravely responsible for the guiding of our children's minds and for the unfolding to them of their duty toward their country. We are false to the charge, intrusted to us as a birthright, and both distinctly unfair to and negligent of our sons and daughters if they reach maturity without a clear knowledge of those things which make them to differ from the youth of foreign lands.

In monarchies, where class distinctions are integral and defined, and where every infant begins to breathe an air which is its own by long inheritance, and not at all the atmosphere of the state above or below it, tradition, custom, inflexible ususage hem it in. Except in the rare instances of men born to be heroes or leaders, the child has a path hedged in for him. If he errs, his class may upbraid, his social stratum may stare and reproach, but his country, the trend and formative action of his native land, is little influenced.

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## The Education of the Citizen

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With us, distinctly in opposition to this state of affairs, the boy born not only in poverty, but amid rude surroundings almost devoid of civilization, may emerge with a marvellous aspiring growth, until he takes into his strong hands the reins of government and alters the destiny of his people. The child of a citizen of the United States ought to understand from the time he can wave his toy flag from his nursery window, that he loves his country not because he chances to have been born there, but because it is his individual possession which he cannot fail to injure or improve, and that he holds one element of its greatness or failure in his own keeping.

Reading Lincoln's life as a typical career, a sort of awe creeps over any thoughtful mother's heart. Here was one of the clearest, simplest cases, what a scientist or surgeon would call a demonstration of a startling fact. It was only the grasping by a specially endowed nature of the opportunity offered to every child in our borders, whose thoughts should turn determinately toward the possi-

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bilities in the life of a citizen of the United States. Had there been no civil war, no great questions of armies or manumission of slaves, this gaunt, semi-civilized nature would have been made famous in the annals of his country simply by the ardor of his love for it, the intensity of his convictions, and his crystal-like clearness of conception of the responsibility of republican manhood. He would have had to achieve something great by the force that was inherent in him and his absolute faith in the duty of a citizen to use the power received by birthright.

What is to prevent your son, or my son, equipped after such different fashion, with mind well stored, with mental capacity trained and disciplined, with enlightenment too great to leave superstition a foothold, with the body of an athlete, and the civilization of the ages for a guide, from being a standard-bearer to his people and upholding the great theories of freedom and unselfish honor for which his forefathers died?

Simply this, my sisters, he has neither the desire nor the ambition to be a defender of

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## The Education of the Citizen

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the republic's faith, nor does it trouble him enough to rouse a vigorous thought what destructive changes undermine the state, so that stocks do not fluctuate, commerce is active, wealth flows in, and his life of easy idleness or well paid work, feels no shock.

The outer surface, the polishing of the smooth way, the absorption of such habits and customs as minimize fatigue, keep social serenity from abrasion, and beautify selfish, self-absorbed life, is what our children seek and crave. They may — nay, have — become famous on every sea for their swift pleasure boats, in every mart of the world for their wares, in every court in Christendom for their eager push for title and insignia of rank. What have they to do with the maintenance of the simple dignity of republican citizenship? It is of inexpressible importance to our daughters that they, wearing the tokens of foreign rank, should make their courtesies in due form in regal presences; it is of primal value to our sons that they have the *entrée* to aristocratic English clubs, and belong to a score of expensive organizations

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formed for whiling away unemployed time and expending too easily obtained wealth. This is not too harsh an outline of our newly developed social class, who have inherited fortune without that balancing weight of responsibility which comes with such inheritances in monarchical countries. This is a very reasonable detail of desire among that class of our citizens who "cannot tell their exact incomes by perhaps five or ten millions per annum"!

And side by side with these, stand those whose overmastering effort is to obtain similar immunity from the restraints of any professional or other labor, and the attainment of a share in the nearest possible degree of this luxury. "Not this, but something greater, larger, richer, grander, more princely than we possessed last year." In how many such homes are the foundation laws of our republic rehearsed in the ears of the children? How many fathers and mothers instil in their sons' hearts, and reiterate in their daily teaching, that there is a fair heritage left to them to protect, over which they are bound to

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## The Education of the Citizen

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watch, where there is no rightful place for these transplanted splendors?

There is literally next to no effort made to inspire interest in the development of our resources, no trouble is taken to educate this fast coming generation on such great topics as the status of immigrants, the granting of the right to vote, the honor of fair elections, the extreme value of national credit. Not once in a hundred, it were safe to say not once in a thousand times, is it the happy lot of a boy to be informed by his parents as to his constitutional rights, much less about his personal responsibility as a protector of his country.

If we could make, by faithful teaching, such impression upon our children as to force a realization of their individual importance as citizens, and excite a longing in our boys' minds to use their power aright, surely it would bear large fruit. If they could learn that here it is not what Lords or Commons, this class or that class, do and believe that insures the righteousness of law, the unsullied honor and the normal, mag-

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nificant development of their country, but the acts, and opinions, and votes of the separate individual man, there must result a final purity in politics, a future honesty of legislation, a reasonable and decent decorum in the passage of acts of government bearing on the whole nation.

There is something lost, a great and ennobling influence thrown away, when a whole generation is left, as is that now maturing, devoid of all sense of individual duty in the government. Cannot any intelligent boy be made to feel a keen interest in such a question, for instance, as the future status of the colored race or of the Indians? Can he not be ready to see the right and wrong of any public measure under present discussion, and acquire a clear understanding that *his* attitude, *his* speech, *his* vote, will be of vital use in preventing wrong and insuring justice?

All that is lacking is conviction, to make all our young people eager to do their share in keeping the right in its place and guarding the national fold from those who would climb over the wall to rob and destroy. If

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we could reach a point of advancement from whence our sons would be eager for seats in Congress, not to get their hands into the public treasury, or grasp some national gift for a particular state, but in order that they might act as sentries on the lookout for foes and dangers to the commonwealth and stand as protectors of those rights which have as their chief glory that they are common to all men, we might challenge the world, with a smile of assurance, to find a blot on our national 'scutcheon.

If our daughters could, by any aid of example or persuasion, be made to see that their greed of money and luxury is like the gnawing of a destructive force upon the strong sound foundation which made them, as women of the United States, of greater importance in the national economy than are the women of any other country, would it not help to multiply homes in which culture stood before splendor, and refined dignity held higher place than display of wealth?

If they could discern that to be a typical lady of the republic required that a woman

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should be finer than her apparel, and that her charm should lie in herself, as representative of a nation whose aim is to equalize God's gifts, not grasp them for our own embellishment, would there not be a hope of a new birth of loveliness at our firesides and an increase of blessing among those who suffer?

The old chivalric cry was, "Noblesse oblige"; with us an equally inspiring and more widely obligatory motive belongs to each and every one of us. We are either one thing or the other, with little chance of being misunderstood; we are clearly only greedy inhabitants of a rich land, concerned for nothing but our individual gain, and willing to let her pose as the unskilled imitator of alien social conditions, or we stand first and last as proud conservators of that renovated civilization which took for its watchword, "A man shall not live unto himself alone."

If we could bring into our children's minds interest and eagerness enough to have them distinctly formulate wishes concerning their country's attitude toward the world, and the

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## The Education of the Citizen

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progress and elevation of mankind, we would have done her good service. If we could bring our boys to the point where they were anxious to use their right as free citizens to vote for any measure of national good, we would have given her what is of more worth than a thousand regiments of bayonets. If we could, as households, do honor to our country by living according to its distinctive principles, rather than by a display of its national resources, we and our children would better deserve our privileges as descendants of the founders of the republic.

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## Home Thoughts

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#### COMRADESHIP OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES

**T**HIS phase of married life is rarely regarded with a just estimation of its importance. One looks with deep regret at the lives which are thus robbed of great delight, and prophesies very prosaic, if not more unhappy, endings of the long partnership, when the first flush of young love's enthusiasm is superseded by a mere division of the necessary household cares and family responsibilities.

As the husband goes "forth to his labor" too commonly the last words are: "Remember to get this or attend to that," and, already full of anxious thought of his day's work, his parting ideas of wife and home are solely of added care. When he returns, too often the mutual part of their conversation turns only on the vexations or trivial details of the family routine and there ends. He has left a busi-

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## Comradeship of Husbands and Wives

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ness partner behind him ; he finds another awaiting him. Naturally his mind will seek diversion elsewhere, or look for rest in the silent companionship of his cigar in a solitary corner.

A husband's "fads" are often most perplexing trials to a wife. What can he find to interest him in these incomprehensible things, is a frequent query. Really these interests are of inestimable value to him. It is a great blessing to any tired man to have a "hobby," and his wife should be earnestly glad of the recreation it gives his mind or the strength it imparts to his body. True, it takes great sympathy with her husband (the true application of the radical meaning of this rare quality) for her to find her interest and joy in his, when, perhaps, he spends all his leisure time for a week in preparing, as Ruskin says, to "go out and kill something." But if all these examinations of guns and cartridges, these sudden demands for mislaid hunting caps and hidden boots, lend zest to all these hours ; if his eye kindles and his step grows active, it is well for her to stop wondering why it pleases

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## Home Thoughts

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him, and give her best energies to being very glad of this diversion to his thoughts, and share his searches, and forget her annoyance at the wide-spread confusion he creates in the realization of the healthful result.

Sometimes the “hobby” rides in quite another path: he is a fancier of costly bindings and rare editions, while the drawing-room needs a new rug and the house wants paint. Nothing is insignificant if it diverts him from the state of the market, the points of his difficult brief, or the destructive routine of whatever his profession or business may be. Learn the value of the seemingly useless things that are dear to him, make yourself like them and share his pleasure, or if that is impossible, take your part in it by entering into his gratification as good for him and therefore surely good for you.

A death-blow to married good-fellowship comes surely to the wife who persistently antagonizes her husband’s natural tastes and inclinations and urges him to take his pleasures in her way. To argue and insist and perseveringly to ask for reasons, simply puts

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## Comradeship of Husbands and Wives

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her outside of his happiest hours and shuts the gate against her of the place where he acts spontaneously and freely as he likes. No measure can take the dimensions of the loss she has so incurred.

Every common interest the wife can grasp, outside of those to which family care is a part, is a buttress against a weakening of that too often transient intercourse which in honeymoon days makes the husband delight himself in being always in his wife's society. It is better worth while to cultivate a knowledge of anything and everything that interests him than it was in the beginning to wear his favorite dress and sing his pet songs. You may cling to him with every fibre of a devoted heart, and seek only his good in all you do ; and yet, if you cannot see with his eyes, and hear with his ears, but foolishly try to make him happy by perpetually endeavoring to draw him away from his favorite pursuits and accept your ideas of rest and enjoyment, your labor is in vain, and your husband will never say of you : "Thou art my rest."

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## Home Thoughts

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It seems an arbitrary rule, and one which does not work both ways ; yet deeper thought discovers a strong and beautiful reason for its existence. Your feminine nature, which bears its burdens of maternity and all the multitude of duties by which we grow strong, is not mated to its facsimile ; your husband is that stronger, different, masculine personality, without which your existence would be incomplete. You do not want to lean upon and look up to a reproduction of yourself, and your share of the perfect union is to find out and fit into your life the pursuits and tastes which make him different from you.

Oh, that it were possible to exterminate nagging from domestic life ! So often with the most loving intentions a wife alienates and irritates, even bitterly wounds, the husband she half worships, by persistent remonstrances or entreaty, or by starting every day a fresh argument on the same theme. Half the time it is wholly concerning what is supposed to be either for his good or his children's ; but the wife cannot give up her point. All the symbolic facts in nature, the

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## Comradeship of Husbands and Wives

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drop of water that wears away the stone, the mouse that gnaws the rope, the crevice that becomes the chasm, are weak illustrations of the fatal result of these arguments upon married comradeship and good fellowship. "As the climbing up a sandy way is to the feet of the aged, so is a wife full of words to a quiet man." Wise, indeed, was the old philosopher who found this quaint similitude; one sees the crumbling sand slide and fall back, and ever draw the woman of many arguments away from her goal.

There is also a deep place of unity in the wifely understanding of the immense importance and honorable responsibilities of her husband's business. It seems so hard to see strength give way, youth fade, and illness threaten under the bondage of a tyrannous profession or an absorbing business. To so order your living that you are sure that he is not dying that you may live luxuriously is the only help you can give. To inveigh against his absorption, to entreat him to let go what he has promised to perform, to fret and worry him through his few hours at home,

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can do no good, and sets you in the midst of the turmoil already in possession of his tired mind. This sort of thing makes men treat their wives as if they were unreasonable children, and lowers the equality of the matrimonial partnership.

When you are watching with an aching heart the multiplying gray hairs and lines of care ; when you see with grief the power of enjoyment growing weak,—keep your trouble in the deep of your heart ; let your demands be few, and let his home be his peace. Fight out the battles of your own realm without disturbing him with the details ; struggle through your vexations in silence, but give to him a serene atmosphere, a welcoming smile, a cheerful response, a patient endurance, until, when the strain is over, you can perhaps find the right time to tenderly point out the dangers of the way. Doubtless an aching head, a confused memory, and a dulled perception have told it all to him most vividly already. From you he wants comfort and rest, diversion from himself, the tonic of new thoughts, and pleasant change.

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## Comradeship of Husbands and Wives

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The glow and fervor of a husband's all-else-forgetting devotion in early married life cannot remain ; the man must labor, and added responsibility takes stern thought ; but the tenderness which grows deeper, the dependence which increases as the years roll on, are better things, reserved for those wives only who have stood shoulder to shoulder all the way, not dragging him back or pulling this way and that, but bravely planting their feet in the path he has chosen, and in hard places whispering, "Forget me ; I will follow."

It is to women like these that the sunset aftermath comes ; to wives like these that old men turn as the path inclines downward, with a beautiful dependence. It is to couples so united that God gives those calm years which are as "clear shining after rain." At the doors of many a cottage, at the firesides of many wealthy homes, sit old couples, hand in hand, comrades to the last. The gentle "don't you remember" brings back memories dear to both, which no one else can share ; and at this last there are no longer separate tastes and desires to which they must

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mutually concede ; but they talk softly of the swift coming time, when

“ We ’ll sleep together at the foot,  
John Anderson, my Jo.”

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## Purpose and Drift

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### XXVI

### PURPOSE AND DRIFT

A HAND on the helm, a course marked out, a point to be reached, — these things are worth more to a woman than many fortunes. How readily one uses nautical similes in these days!

How many thousand women are “settling down for the winter” with little beyond the routine changes of house and clothes to guide them through the coming months! The material surroundings of house and person attended to, the hangings in place, and the winter costumes ordered, the cards sent out, and the servants at their posts, what comes next? Like Shamrock and Columbia, they await the favoring breeze, and like these bird-winged combatants, they are sadly apt to encounter disheartening mists and the benumbing influence of cloudy calms, which lead only to disappointment.

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Here is just the point where the original intent of the Creator that we should each "fulfil some God-given hest" comes plainly into sight, and we realize that we were meant to work with these nerve-tipped fingers and keenly active brains. But the centuries have so shaped and moulded us and our lives that multitudes of women are like commanders of great armies in time of peace: their weapons rust in their arsenals.

The varying status of feminine existence in our strangely varying social life makes it hard for habit, or even convention — that all-powerful influence — to establish precedents or set in motion tides of opinion regarding the ordering of our daily activities. The very rich women of our great cities are caught in violent currents which bear them on with bewildering force. Social duties are strong duties, not to be set aside if society is to maintain its due place as a ministry for good. No man deprived of social diversion and social broadening is a symmetrical man, or fit to do his best with his powers; no woman has fulfilled her mis-

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## Purpose and Drift

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sion if she does not exercise some beneficent and beautifying authority over the circle in which she moves. But these things do not include or arise from an abandonment of time and money and all one's energies to whatever may lay its clutches upon us, and they lie far and away outside of the uplifting use of bringing men and women together for the delight of sharing their personal gifts one with another. A struggle to outdo our neighbors, to be the astonishing inventor of some new thing, to grasp for ourselves all that our world offers, is not a social duty, nor does it make us a help to the happiness of our fellow-beings.

I think, or rather speak, first of women who are very rich and hold a place that certainly will bring to them endless activities, whether they seek them or not, because they are continually in the public vision, and seem a controlling force in a certain not small sense. Yet it is rarely a fact that out of this class comes one who deliberates what she will do with the enormous power which lies waiting her orders. Still more rare is

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it for any such endowed woman to plan out a distinct, well-considered purpose by which she shall gladden life about her, and rise herself as she works to a noble end by the fair steps she plants for others.

But there is a far larger class of our country-women, in city, and town, and village all over the land, whose lives are not burdened with the responsibilities of wealth, yet have comfortable incomes, relieving them from labor and anxiety ; who rise and sleep, give orders, shop, visit, "see to the children," — curious phrase, — and never dream of directing the course of their gentle lives, nor of saying what shall be the next step to take.

There cannot be one woman in such circumstances as these who is incapable of or unequal to the attainment of something good for herself and her neighborhood ; all that is needed is a will to carry out a well-arranged purpose. Each of us has a preference, a leaning toward some special activity. The mind may be athirst for stimulating, energizing tonics ; the fingers may be eager for

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## Purpose and Drift

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artistic or other clever uses ; the heart may yearn to heal and enrich sad lives and impoverished bodies,—what we need to do is to choose our path and set about determinately to keep it clear and walk in it.

So often a plaintive voice will say with true sincerity in its tone: “I should so enjoy doing something of that sort,”—meaning one or other form of womanly advancement,—“but I never have the opportunity offered me.” Opportunities are rarely offered us; we have to make them and keep them open and free, and bring a fleet of bristling protectors to warn off obstructing interlopers. Says the old Greek hymn of St. John of Damascus, “*I will be crowned.*” In this spirit only can we obtain the control of our lives and cease to drift with wind and tide in purposeless dulness, attaining nothing.

A veil of tenderness dims the eyes which strive to look into those pathetic lives that are led by women detached from the blessed service of wifehood. Be they unmarried or widowed, they have to live without the en-

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riching, uplifting, recompensing duties by which their more favored sisters are called daily to some act bringing good for those they love best.

At times, we have, within a narrow radius close under our observation, not a few of these, perhaps all more or less gifted, each stationary in her place, delighted when some chance arises to do good, or help, or fill some vacant office. A thoughtful invitation to drive, or walk, or dine diversifies a sadly monotonous existence. An illness gives them the happy opportunity to read to an invalid, or sooth a restless child, or temporarily take up the reins of government which have fallen from the disabled hands of sister or friend. These are to them like the visits of "the angel" who of old was said to stir the waters of healing Bethesda. New life, a ripple of joy overflows the heart which finds itself necessary and of use in the world.

Not one such life need to lie drifting on the uncertain tide of daily existence. Given that the powers are few, the means limited, the field circumscribed, a well-chosen purpose

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## Purpose and Drift

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to accomplish something for one's self and one's neighbors, adhered to with patient assiduity, must — there is no peradventure — must accomplish an end. No one need be without an interesting activity beneficent to others, and of untold value to herself. But it will never come and thrust its hand in ours and say, "Come, use me."

The trouble is that we do not like to do things alone ; we do not want to make ventures, and find them mistaken in their premises ; we, above all, do not wish to seem singular or pretentious. Another hindrance is that beginnings have to be small. There is a brave old proverb that applies vigorously to all these : " Nothing venture, nothing have." Try its efficacy.

Even a purely self-seeking purpose is far better than none. If it be only so much advance on pure drift as planning out a course of reading, or the study of a language, or even to make a daily visit where art holds some teaching court: to say you will do it, and steadfastly adhere to your purpose, strengthens every sinew of character and

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makes you a worthier woman and a pleasanter companion. Your “shoulder to the wheel of progress” will be of far more use than if you sat like Marianna at your chamber window, and said of longed-for opportunity, “It cometh not.”

And still further within the projected shadow of sorrow’s widespread wings sit those who are physically feeble, and whose best purposes must always be coupled with a submissive “if I am able.” Yet even here purpose gives strength. Though we may not do it to-day, to-morrow will come, and if our faces are sincerely set to reach the post of victory we shall at some time reach it.

In the baleful story of “Jude,” Mr. Hardy’s exquisitely poetic picture of how Oxford towers looked to the undeveloped lad as he, gazing afar, saw opalescent gleams through which they lured him on, is a tragic forecast of the fate of the weak, uncertain man, afterward to die so wretchedly within the city’s walls. Mists, though irradiated with gold, are illusive: we want to see our destined end clear-cut and strong, a thing real and positive

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## Purpose and Drift

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standing before us, before we have any good hope of success.

If the degraded lives of our fellow-creatures, the dark spots of human existence, prove the exciting cause of strong desire in us ; if the “cry of the children” reaches our ears, and stirs our hearts ; if the wish to brighten lives near our hand, and heal that well-clothed Lazarus who sits at most of our gates asking for aid for hidden sores ; if the mere craving for use of our own intellectual powers is the moving influence of our sometimes thoughts, — let them in and woo them to take root and bring forth harvests.

A trifling advance day by day, a step taken regularly and repeatedly once a week, a garment made by long endeavor, an hour given with fixed perseverance where children lie in helpless suffering — the smallest thing “done with a will” and persevered in against the long odds of interruption and disappointing hindrances and the disheartening pressure of disease, ennable life and make our existence a pleasure and a benefit.

A perplexed, aspiring young woman once

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took counsel of a very important and successful matron, asking how she accomplished her extraordinary work. "I have taught myself to say no," she said promptly. "When I have decided to do a certain thing at a certain time, I keep to my purpose though I run the risk of being thought selfish and ungracious. My friends now know that I am only too glad to do what they ask when I have the opportunity." There is no question as to the practical value of this resolution ; if you have set a day and hour for doing a thing, and especially if you have promised to co-operate with another, the only way to succeed is to shake off all that calls you away from your purpose.

There is an irresistible tendency to envy the energetic lives of the young women whom we see every morning coming like a small army to take their places at office, desk, and shop-counter, each speeding to the work on which her own and mayhap many another life depends. There is an alert, earnest, satisfied look in even the faces which are otherwise unattractive, that one cannot help

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seeing betrays self-satisfaction. We have a fair "fighting chance" to gain that same air of self-content without contending with what these working sisters of ours have to endure. Ours is the right to hope for and win the cup that life holds out, brimful of satisfaction.

### XXVII

#### DISAPPOINTMENT NOT FAILURE

**I**F there is an experience in which all of us have a common and a certain share, it is the disheartening one of disappointment, and yielding to its influences, either as a token of incapacity in ourselves, or as an evidence of adverse fate hindering our lives, is the common ruin of myriads of men and women. Sometimes it is a call to endurance without which half our strength would lie dormant; sometimes it is a summons to heroic endeavor for others which changes our condition from selfish lassitude to an elevating energy; sometimes it is a command to show forth the beauty of a soul which makes its

“Own light  
Through darkness far to go.”

It is an open question which of life's extremes suffers most from the vanishing of

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## Disappointment not Failure

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some bright expectation, or the closing of some door of hope toward which our energies have pressed. Youth has in itself that dear spring of vitality which allows it to rekindle desire after one dream has faded. But there is something wonderfully pathetic in the surprise with which the young heart first learns the force of disappointment. Given certain premises, it had seemed so sure, so beyond controversy, that success must crown effort. The first shock of discovery that human endeavor and judgment are both wholly untrustworthy, and that "there is a power which shapes our ends" against which the most impetuous and well-directed endeavor is as futile as the spray which strikes a rock, is to the undisciplined nature a terrible disclosure; to those who do not recognize in this commanding power, not only "divinity," but a beneficent Fatherhood controlling for good, it is too often a temptation to despair.

And to the old, who having learned the necessity to distrust the outcome of their most promising plans, yet in late life see some golden gate shining through the mists

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of their waning years with such a lovely lustre that they venture to think : "At last Elysium is in sight," there comes a bitterness unknown to youth. For these there comes no to-morrow ; their day is past ; their force is spent.

To both stages of disillusion there is but one helper : disappointment never can be failure except within the narrow limit of the endeavor we are then making. If it controls all of a man or woman's life, it is the fault of the individual and not due to the actual force of the circumstances which surround them. No life was ever denuded of hope or destined to the destruction of aspiration by its Creator. "Up Guards and at them," is what turns the tide of our threatened defeats ; life's battles need the tactics of Wellington at Waterloo. There is always something else to do ; the "thin red line" may seem so attenuated as to make resistance folly, but it is the heart of the individual which leads to victory.

Despondency is not only a folly, but a sin ! What gives it opportunity to hold us in its

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## Disappointment not Failure

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miserable grasp is most often our own vanity. We had felt sure we knew what was best for us ; we had no doubts that the thing we wanted was to us the very essence of life, and we cling to our own estimate of things with such tenacity that, being turned back on the high road we had chosen to travel, we will not see that there are better ways for us to walk in and that our short-sightedness has been unable to measure the future which is hidden.

As I seek illustration for my argument to what an array of forms does this pregnant word give birth ! Disappointments : that great horde which is synonymous with humanity ! and of some, how hard to speak with a steady voice and tearless eyes, or write with an untrembling hand ! Yet if we are to enrich the world by any influence of good courage ; if we are to be helpers and not hinderers of our generation ; if we are to lift up the fallen and dwell in homes whose windows send out light of good cheer into the world's night, we must not let them be confounded with failures in the record of our race. Let

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them be transformed into opportunities by our recognition of our own fallibility and the certainty of God's wisdom.

Perhaps the most severe form of human disappointment comes through an unworthy or ungrateful child. Here we have the power of hope brought to its minimum, and the possibility of finding ground for consolation reduced to its smallest power. Yet if we add to the weakness and selfishness and sin of our offspring our own shipwreck, and make of our unhappiness an excuse to add misery to the lives about us, and let darkness settle down upon all of life, we have no right to say that we were justified by our grief. It is simply to make a failure for ourselves of what might have been a chance to turn from our own distress to lend a helping hand elsewhere. No efforts tell with such force as those which are recognized as coming from a suffering heart, and no appeals for good are as eloquent as those which are made by men and women who forget self for the sake of their fellow-creatures.

The toil of years is futile; the great busi-

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## Disappointment not Failure

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ness built up with such intense labor crumbles to the dust, and the man stands dumb before his broken hope. The boys for whose sake he strove may find in this catastrophe their salvation from useless lives of foolish luxury ; his daughters be kept from the sorrow of loveless marriages. There is always room for a vigorous perhaps, that all moneyed loss is a concealed gain. A man who falls with his fortune is very possibly proving that he was unfit to hold and use it.

Those keenly suffering disappointments which turn the bright dreams of a lover's heart into the mocking shadows which bid him think life not worth the guarding, and attainment robbed of the guerdon of love a valueless possession, too often succeed in taking from a man his best incentives and render a character meant to be great, a mere drudge in the human hive. Who shall unveil the possible, which did not show its face ? The lost love so coveted, so bitterly grieved for, might, without much stretch of peradventure, have been the very greatest sorrow which could have been sent to him. Many a man

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who has clasped a hand with a grasp which was strong with undying devotion and the deepest trust, and who counted his wedding his triumph over all other men, has in after years hidden his face in trembling hands and carried his grief in the deep of his heart. This disappointment which he says in his bitterness has “ruined his life,” has been like a shield, thrust between him and the failure in which he falsely counts himself to have fallen.

And far within the limits of these great trials, which stand out in such prominence among the throng, are those every-day, nay, hourly, thwartings of our honest, earnest efforts, which seem too commonplace, too evidently to belong to the ordinary lot of all men, to contain germs of any good. We would be strong to do and labor; we are weak and impotent. We would make a moderate, reasonable income, and we cannot find work. We seek with sedulous care a home that shall be at once a wise and reasonable shelter; we find our judgment has been at fault, our toil in vain. We set before ourselves a task for the good of our fellow-men;

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## Disappointment not Failure

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our knowledge has been too scant, our experiment has been tried and is found wanting. There is nothing commonplace in any or all of these. However they touch us, in whatsoever measure they serve to control our lives, they are great instruments toward great ends. The development of any human soul is not a small thing ; and these unnoticed, unrecorded trials are each like constraining moulds, in which some individual man or woman's nature is taking shape.

Let us neither permit ourselves to settle into gloomy belief that a fate is working against us, nor pass even seemingly trivial disappointments by as things to be pushed aside and forgotten. Let us take them up as they come, with cheerful seriousness, and see what they may mean to us. Were we too confident in ourselves, too eager for wealth, too self-absorbed, too unconscious of our weaknesses, too blind to those of others? What was there in this might have been?

And as for failure, "let it not so much as be named among us." That man only is a failure who makes himself one ! In one sense,

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and that not a narrow one, let us say of what has disappointed us, "let the dead past bury its dead." Not by fickle change of purpose, nor by forgetfulness of life's first hopes and loves, much less by putting out of remembrance our mistakes and errors, but by summoning these all together as our treasure-house of experience, through which we shall learn new secrets of success. Even if we should, by what happily is a rare occurrence, fail of all material victories despite undaunted courage and perseverance, we shall yet be beyond all peril of failure if we have walked, as men should walk, upright before mankind, and with our faces turned toward heaven.

Our generation seems largely separated into two great divisions, the recklessly confident and the sad natures who shut out the sun and see no brightness or progress in the world's advance. Were we able to shape our destinies without trial of disappointment, the best things in human character would be lost, and unlimited success, surfeit of accomplished desire, would destroy every element of noble endeavor.

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## Disappointment not Failure

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Let us take humble ground of self-appreciation. We are amazingly fallible, we are grievously short-sighted ; let us be quick to look into our spoiled plans and vanished expectations for our own mistakes, and see if we have not found in disappointment a true indication of our fault.

At the very worst point of trial through unfulfilled hope we have left to us the power to succeed in showing the very noblest traits which characterize the truly great.

### XXVIII

#### THE ERA OF TOO PLAIN SPEECH

“**C**ALLING a spade a spade” may have its advantages, but if we use the respectable name of this useful domestic implement to cover a rough and merciless discussion of all nature’s less noble processes, and the laying bare of all manner of evil things, it is seriously to be questioned whether humanity at large gains by this modern habit.

If by “spade” we mean the bold use of speech to freely talk of diseases, and every type of bodily suffering, we are surely not enriching the thought, nor enlivening the mind, nor adding to the good cheer of the world. Time was when it was considered the extreme of ill-manners to talk of pains and aches, their causes and results, except to the physicians and those to whom close relation gave a right to appeal for sympathy, or

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## The Era of too Plain Speech

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whose love or friendship demanded a true statement of conditions. Nowadays in any public place, well-dressed people speaking a cultivated speech will while away the ennui of an hour's travel by minutely comparing notes on digestive processes, or describing with careful detail the horrors of a surgical operation.

I have to-day an impression so vivid as to seem that I had been an eye-witness, of the excision of a diseased bone, which came to me from a most absorbed and eagerly interested group, describing an operation performed upon an unhappy football player. Expletives from the young men emphasized the most distressing points in the story, while the young women of the party punctuated the narrative with frequent veiled, high-voiced sounds, as if they were themselves in pain. The day was charming, the blue waters of the bay were rippling in jewelled brightness, the passing vessels and river-craft were full of suggestive interest, but the young people preferred the operating table and a fellow-creature's pain as a source of mental excite-

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ment. Worst of all, they were speaking of a sensitive man, who all his life thereafter would shrink from the exposure of a lameness which marked him as a disabled athlete. What would he have endured had he known that his young girl friends were being regaled with a careful account of his suffering, the expression of his face, the exact region of the injury, and the amount of bone removed? If there seems a lack of self-respect in telling all our bodily ailments to an indifferent and semi-public audience, there is surely the worse evil of lack of consideration and regard for our neighbor, in rehearsing what we may know of his disordered system. It is very noticeable that in rural towns, where personal interest is so strong, a desperate illness robs an important or popular member of the community of all privacy.

Some truly sincere friend calls to inquire, and by privilege sees and catechises the nurse, and goes forth to tell, without a thought of doing an injury, all that she has heard. "The pain is such and such, the remedies are these, the cause of the illness is no doubt

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## The Era of too Plain Speech

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the great anxiety she has suffered. It is not generally known, but Mr. ——'s affairs are much involved, and their oldest boy is very dissipated."

Two generations ago, not one person in fifty, belonging to what was then called "the higher walks of life," would have thought it decorous to unveil anything physical or mental which gave pain inside a friend's dwelling. Being disarmed and made helpless by illness, did not make life free to public discussion.

Certain specific or hereditary conditions of disease, either in mind or body, used to be regarded as too terrible to be told openly; friends and relatives were satisfied by the tender, yet guarded, sympathy which reached them, through the veil of their reticence: I had almost said decent reticence. Now you very often hear: "I do not think they speak of it, but I really believe So-and-So is showing symptoms of insanity," and the speaker hears no echo of his own words, which should emphasize that the family desire to avoid publicity.

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## Home Thoughts

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If it is the high office of human speech to gladden and charm, to make our intercourse with each other a help in life's journey, what a loss it is to admit into the accepted topics for familiar talk the miseries and diseased conditions of our fellow men and women. If, of all our possessions, our bodies and minds are most positively our own, what can be a greater violation of the golden rule than the exploiting of the failing powers of either? What does the world gain by making free discussion of the most unlovely aspects of physical existence a fashionable fad?

Laying a cautionary hand on the thoughtless speaker's arm, the writer said: "Do you think he would desire to have that known?" "Why, there is nothing to be ashamed of in being ill," was the astonished answer.

Nor does the plain speech of our day stop short with the discussion of disease: offences against morality are now considered entirely open topics of conversation. The "touching of pitch" has not ceased to be a clinging defilement, and no student of psychical con-

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## The Era of too Plain Speech

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ditions can possibly doubt that every young mind shrinks with less horror from those forms of evil which he or she are allowed to speak of freely to their companions, or in the family circle.

It may seem the assertion of a mind hampered by bygone beliefs and not "up to date," but whatever the argument may lose in force because of the writer's point of view, it is a stern and lamentable fact that many social offences have ceased to have the awful significance they ought to wear through the habit of making them the subject of familiar talk.

Especially is this noticeable in the wretched details of divorce suits and the gossip concerning the marriages of the divorced. However arbitrarily and unwisely restricted the opinions of our forefathers may now seem to the young people of the end of the century, the fact that the home was more sacred, the reverence for marital vows and obligations a thousandfold more deep and binding with them, cannot be denied. A broken marriage vow was an appalling thing, a divided house-

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## Home Thoughts

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hold, a public sorrow, and the shadows lay deep over the pathways of those who had forsaken each other.

To-day our schoolgirls do not shrink from taking partisan interest for and against the separating parties, and assert their beliefs in the rights and wrongs of the case as they would differ about the merits of a singer or the beauty of a gown. Nothing awful remains about the idea of a dismembered household and disgraced parents. Lack of religious conception and of hallowed fervor in the marriage vows of the dominant generation is, of course, to be held guilty for the altered views of the gayer world ; but our fast following young people, nurtured in better, nay, in the best and purest atmosphere our times afford, are distinctly injured by allowing the results of this decadence to be an admitted theme for conversation.

In no way can it be disguised that certain of nature's acts and labors are unlovely, and natural instinct instructs us to keep them in obscurity. "It is a perfectly natural thing" seems to mean in these days that it is wise

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## The Era of too Plain Speech

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to talk about it. This theory brushes away a veil which unwarped nature always draws over much of the work in her great laboratory. It is only when by artificial hardening of primitive sensibilities men and women arrive at a totally unnatural state of thought and feeling that calling "a spade a spade" becomes a sort of mania, and delicacy of speech and disclosure cease to be considered virtues.

Carried beyond the present strained attempt to eliminate all "that old-fashioned affectation of refinement" from our speech, the common usage of our era will become "brutally sincere," to quote a clever man's verdict on the trend of latter-day conversation.

Let our sorrow for our neighbors' ills take the form of defence of their privacy ; let our consciousness of evil make us eager to rob it of progressive force, by keeping silence about it among our children, except when in earnest expostulation we bid them beware of it and its causes.

Let us make our children feel a responsi-

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## Home Thoughts

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bility as to what they talk about; let them be taught that man is separated from the rest of the animal creation by his power of speech, and that it behooves them to use it for the disseminating of good cheer, the distribution of pleasant and hopeful thoughts. We should remind them that even a dying animal or a wounded savage will withdraw into some leafy covert where he may hide inevitable suffering. Loss of a stilted high-flown speech we may be congratulated upon, but with every energy we have, do let us use our emancipated tongues for the good and joy of the world!

If we could eliminate personality from our ordinary chat, and keep its disclosures for the few whom we would bind to us with golden chains, it would do a great deal toward raising the level of our verbal intercourse. Not only this, it would make a far more marked separation between friendship and mere acquaintance, much to the enhancing of the value of the first. And learning to be cautious about ourselves, we would naturally be more careful concerning our

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## The Era of too Plain Speech

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fellow-creatures. How dear do they become to whom we may turn with the glad certainty that it is of import to them that we remain well and happy!

There are so many delightful things to speak of; one summer's day's experience shows us myriads of ways to diversify our neighbor's home-bound thoughts; an hour in which something has passed before our eyes which gives a grace to life is capital enough to work on in order to brighten an evening at home.

It is wise to realize that our thoughts need clothing before they venture into the world's auditorium, and that many things in which there is no harm are yet not meant to be talked about.

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### DECLINE OF LIFE

A SINGULAR dignity encompasses the death-beds of England's great men. Where with us the public life of a man sinks into insignificance, and the family circle closes about him, there his great associates, his beneficiaries, his pupils, sometimes the representatives of the throne, come with reverent fidelity as to a shrine, and each in turn thanks him for the labor of his life, and bids him God-speed on his last mysterious journey, from which he cannot return. It makes a strange and fascinating impression upon one's thoughts, as we picture the debilitated and fast dying body lying in expectation of the mighty summons, and the noblest of his race and generation coming one by one to say: "Hail and farewell."

Recently the London papers have given us a glimpse into Mr. Gladstone's bed-chamber. Rarely does so clear and sharply drawn a

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## Decline of Life

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picture reach us through the condensed medium of a cabled message. "His windows overlook a field in which a cricket match is in progress, but he does not look out; the greater part of the time he lies with his eyes closed, only opening them to recognize the friends who come to speak a last word with him." What thoughts stir in that large brain, so perseveringly active and intense in vitality, we can faintly discern: "'Tell them,' he says to those he cannot see, 'that I shall never forget them.'" "Grand Old Man," indeed, ready for transition and for that future, the nature of which he leaves trustingly to his God, in which he has no fear of annihilation, but anticipates the active continuance even of his affections. "Tell them I shall never forget them!"

Thinking of him has in it something analogous to hearing him in the past days of his eloquence; his personality acts like a leaven. Those of us who have passed our meridian may well consider how his mental force has been conserved, and by what means the last twenty years of his life have been made so

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## Home Thoughts

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useful to the world and so pleasant to himself.

It is greatly our own fault that we so keenly dread to grow old, and so quickly give up the active pursuits of life. The field is a different field, the resources are not the same, but there is a definite and easily attained new area of usefulness and accomplishment, if we but frankly admit to ourselves that it is time to enter it. "To those who have no resources in themselves for living well and happily, every age is burdensome," says Marcus Cato.

One of our chief difficulties is our discontent with nature when it deprives us of the employments and amusements of youth for which we are no longer fitted. As well might the young strive still to be children after maturity has opened the gate of life for them to enter. We look upon age as a thing to be resisted and combated instead of fitting ourselves to enjoy its immunities, and preparing our bodies and minds for a new phase of activity and happiness. Middle life ought properly to be as much a time of

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## Decline of Life

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tutelage for the coming years as childhood for manhood and womanhood.

To "keep one's mind intent like a bow" is part of this wise preparation, not to relax or impair our habits of mental alertness and acquisition. Why should we cease to store up honey against the wintry days to come? I knew a woman of sixty-two who acquired the German language so perfectly that she even wrote the Gothic character with ease. Her youngest daughter, having married a German gentleman, made her permanent home among his people; the gray-haired mother acquired the means of endearing herself to her son-in-law, and of emphasizing her kinship with her grandchildren.

The sort of mercantile way in which we regard mental effort after a certain point in life is passed is really a sad mistake even from that very standpoint. "I intended to have followed such a subject up, but I am too old; it will be of no use to me now." This generally means that a man's activity in his profession or a woman's in her world is drawing to a close, and there will be no

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## Home Thoughts

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reward commensurate to the effort. As well say we would let our limbs shrivel and grow weak because we no longer expected to run races.

When shall we need greater enrichment for our minds, when need deeper memories to draw upon, when require larger riches of knowledge, than when our kingdom is narrowed to our firesides, and our charm for those about us shall consist in what we give to them from within? When shall we require more for ourselves than when we sit alone, while the younger lives of the household are seeking their diversions apart from us in summer fields or the gayety of winter ball-rooms?

Every youthful enjoyment laid aside should be quickly replaced with one suitable to the transition stage we have entered upon; every activity abandoned should have a new one, within our limitations, to fill the gap. Solon said that he grew old "learning something new every day," and he who does this is never without a certain youthfulness of spirit which binds him to the young.

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## Decline of Life

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A gracious dignity beautifies the man or woman who does not dissemble concerning advancing years, but seeks to develop the beauty and influence of the autumn which may bring gray hairs and wrinkles but need not also make us dull or uninteresting, or take away our influence.

It seems as if it ought to be harder for a man to grow old cheerfully than for a woman, because of the instinctive delight he takes in physical strength and activity; but, on the whole, men bear their losses in these matters with composure, and in any large assembly it is the gray-heads who carry off the honors. The dignified courtesy and fine bearing of a cultivated man of sixty gives him immense advantage over his son, who yet wears his manhood as a garment to which he is unused.

To women the loss of beauty is so sharp a trial, the change from the grace and slenderness of girlhood so severe a discipline, that there is commonly a touch of acrimony in the phrase with which she sets aside some pet decoration or some fashion which it would be ridiculous to assume. Unless she can put

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## Home Thoughts

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all this away and take in their place the sweet calmness of later life to render her face lovely and lovable, and for the rose that has faded on her cheek can substitute that smile which some women wear who have conquered and found peace in their victory, she will lose that rarest beauty, that charm which no one can resist, which comes with happy old age.

I know no influence more potent, no fascination more irresistible, than that which emanates from an old lady full of experiences which make her sympathetic and quick to understand, warmly alive to the love affairs of the young, tender of the sorrows she knows only too well how to comfort, merry with the children, reminiscent with her own generation. How eagerly the youngsters listen to her tales of times gone by, how quickly they learn to take her unselfish counsel! When a good and clever woman has reached that beautiful table-land of life, from which she can look over the many battles on its plains, and yet feel sure that life is worth living, and men and women worth loving, she has nothing to envy in those beginning

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## Decline of Life

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the struggle. It is no paradox to speak of a beautiful old age, while such as these exist.

No degree of optimism can make the ravages of time upon our bodies pleasant; impaired vision and hearing are bitter trials. But these are usually the slow and rarer evidences of increasing years, at least to such a degree as to give pain. We talk of these too much and concentrate our minds upon kindred evils to the exclusion of the obverse side of the picture.

The regulating the habits of our lives so as to keep health as the handmaid of content is no small art; to learn the use of gentle, regular exercise and sensible and invigorating diet; to keep every power at its utmost output of activity; to keep in touch with the day, and temper its ardor by our knowledge and experience; to be a balance wheel to the complex machinery of a modern household; to strive to look as freshly neat and as fastidiously careful as in the days of youth are not easy tasks, but when a woman so meets her old age she is of more value than any other member of her family circle, and need not sigh for any hour of past importance.

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## Home Thoughts

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Says the late Master of Balliol : "Lady Airlie rather scoffs at me when I tell her that old age is the best part of life." He certainly, like Mr. Gladstone, demonstrated the capabilities of doing good and acquiring continuously new power to the end of his vigorous and intensely industrious life. Reading his frequent assertions of the gifts which age brings in its hand, and especially being struck with the value he placed on the activity of mind as a portion of its duties, caused me to think of the homes I had seen gladdened, nay, hallowed by those who like him found in their declining years "the largest opportunity to do good to others." And, alas ! I remembered also those whose added days were but as added misery to themselves and their families, and it seemed a legitimate topic for Home Thoughts, to ponder a little upon how to make preparation for that new phase of our existence which so many of us are approaching. The youngest and the oldest of the family should surely be those whose lives give out the most unalloyed delight to the household.

And as to that further advance, that sure

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## Decline of Life

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transition, to which the sad-eyed angel we call Death leads us, the old heathen said : “If our belief is true, we go to greater happiness, and if we are mistaken, we are sure at least of the surcease of every pain.” The great Christian, sure of greater and unending development, says tenderly : “I shall never forget them.” Why should we cloud our last years with fear and dread? Rather in this age of “orders,” let us create a new guild : “The Society of Delightful and Happy Old People.”

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## Home Thoughts

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### XXX

### CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS

1899

**T**HIS year especially, with the severity of midwinter standing at the very threshold of the cold season, these short, dark days seem pregnant with depressing influences. Visions of sinking ships and wreck-strewn coasts, of struggling men and women lost in snow; of frozen cattle and forlorn sheep found huddled in death, in close-pressed heaps, linger about us after the day's newspaper is laid down, and the day seems scarcely on its way before the level beams of the sun slant in from the west and we have to seek an artificial light to finish our tasks. The death of nature this year seems like a terrible tragedy; the loveliness of a resigned and beautiful decline has been lost to us; the growth and glory of the fields and hills seem to have been strangled and choked before our eyes.

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## Christmas Thoughts

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That kind of introspection which numbers our losses and fails to count our gains, that sense of impotence which creeps over the boldest hearts in the face of the furious aspect of storm and tempest, stills the ambitions of men and the frivolities of women. What are the boasted forces of steam and electricity, and all the long catalogue of mighty things which we have trammelled and tamed and put in harness, before the wrath of the sea which tosses our great ships as if they were cockle-shells, and the majesty of a gale blowing eighty miles an hour?

Even the small aggravations of discomfort which slush and mud and biting cold produce send a man home in a bad humor, and make a woman feel that all her plans are futile. As the father turns his latch-key in the lock and stamps his chilled feet upon the soiled mat, he is rarely a joyous figure; nor is the face a cheerful one which he turns to the world as he tries to shake off the snow from his umbrella. But let him hear the rush of his children's feet as they come down

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## Home Thoughts

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the stair to meet him, and feel their young arms about his neck, and he is an altered man. In ten minutes he is smiling over their excited account of the figure of Santa Claus which they have seen in the window of their favorite toy-shop.

Nothing daunts their childish ardor, nothing robs their visions of the glory which is born in them; the material has no influence on what is made up of imagination and desire. What is it to Alice that the snow lies heaped in sodden, disfigured piles before the door? It is bright and pure and sparkling in the country where Kris Kringle dwells, and just what he needs to make his sleigh run easily and animate his reindeer. What does "laughing Allegra" care about signals of distress and great hulls grinding upon rocks? Her world is bounded by the measure of a "baby-house" which she covets and furnishes in her eager mind a dozen times a day. Little thought has "Edith with golden hair" about the long hours in dull offices, into which the hurrying sun scarcely peeps, while clerks are summing up the

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## Christmas Thoughts

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product of a losing business year. Radiant images of dream-dolls dance before her eyes, and her father leans back in his arm-chair and forgets it all,— stress of weather and strain of tightening markets,— and laughs and grows young.

The sense of expectation, of something sweet and tender and lovely and embellishing to our lives, enters into our hearts ; whether we will or whether we resist, in some way Christmas is bound to bring us some joy. The fond, clearly materialized wish of the child's heart is not ours. We may even know that our share of the festival will not take the form of gifts of any sort. Yet there is light ahead which we cannot shut out, and if it is only an added warmth of caress, a more than ordinary lingering in a greeting kiss which enriches us, they do their work, and the knowledge that they lie before us acts as an illumination to the dull atmosphere of the dying year.

There is a strange, subtle force in the far-reaching spirit of Christmas which is inexpressibly touching and delightful ; it tarries

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## Home Thoughts

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not alone in the dwelling of the rich or the happy, but finds its cheerful way into the dreariest places, and creeps into the narrow entrances of sunless alleys, and brightens the eyes of hungry children who somehow believe good is on its way, though they know of no full hand from which to look for blessing. It is delightful to realize that the small bare feet which traverse the slippery pavements are less tired because of this anticipation, and that scantily covered little ones hug close together on cold nights and forget to complain while they talk of the possibilities of light and warmth and feasting of eyes and mouths on the way to them in these dark days. I doubt if there is a "slum" in our great town in which the children are not acting as torch-bearers in these gloomy days and nights, and waking in the dull brains of their parents thoughts of something hidden in the future which shall bring joy.

A truck loaded with the cruelly-lopped, fast-bound young trees which will soon be so gayly dressed will kindle whole settlements

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## Christmas Thoughts

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of grimy children into enthusiasm, and they catch up the broken bits about the markets as precious treasures and wave them in triumph as they run toward home. No Hosanna is familiar to their tongues; but they are the heralds of "good will on earth" toward suffering men, and are happier than at any other time in the whole year.

We cannot be cynical or cross even in the pandemonium of the toy-shops which at any other time would be unbearable, and unless in what a good German friend calls "the last despair," we will not be infuriated even by the rudeness which snatches the thing we hesitate over from under our nearly closing hands, or pushes between us and a long-fought-for goal. If our pet loses that especial curly white-woolled dog, some other brown-eyed little one will hug it to sleep on Christmas night; it is all for the children.

And when, in houses whence the minstrels are banished, and in which the yearning of sorrow grows more intense with remembrance of "happier things," the spirit of Christmas stands hesitating at the door, let him but find

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## Home Thoughts

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a child to lead him by the hand, and shadows will fly before him. To how many a grandmother and grandfather the sudden entrance of a jolly boy or girl is like the coming of a deliverance from bondage! The droll little figures, muffled and leggined and bundled and "happed," rushing in with glowing cheeks and noisy voices, bring back the days of long ago, the dear memories of the departed, the missing, the separated, and the old warmth kindles in their hearts and the old delight in "making the children happy" asserts itself, and they also see visions of drums and rocking-horses and dolls and baby-houses, and forget that an hour ago life had seemed narrowed to a retrospect.

For the dreams and longings of the grown folk we may have misgivings; they are rarely realized, and to the young girls and lads on the threshold of manhood such intense reality appertains to their desires that no "almost the same thing" fills their need. What impossible wishes sometimes enter the unreflecting minds of girls of sixteen and seventeen! But the child-heart is so easily, uncritically

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## Christmas Thoughts

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happy over so little that we can never fear that we cannot make at least one little soul blissfully satisfied. The blessedness of caring for little things, of treasuring trifles, is one of the joyous qualities of childhood. Our youngsters may all shout for joy, and yet leave us something to carry down into the dark places where their less fortunate brothers and sisters find ecstasy in the discarded bit of gilt paper from last year's tree, and clap their hands over a string of colored glass balls.

If the children's expectation of receiving and dreams of acquisition are delightful to their dear hearts and keep them on a sort of mental tip-toe through these gloomy weeks, surely the making ready to gratify them, which is our share, is the better half of all this vivifying, cheering preparation.

There are old women, I know one very intimately, who absolutely enjoy the beauty of a sweet-faced doll, and take the keenest pleasure in examining the dainty clothing and delicate fineness of detail which should always enhance its charm. An instinctive gesture of protection and care will arise in even a

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## Home Thoughts

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grandame's heart as she fancies how her namesake of the second generation will cuddle her baby in her round arms, and sees a vision of the soft cheek laid against dolly's flaxen curls.

I remember well seeing two fathers, men of affairs, known well in New York's busiest places of struggle, who, after a happy hour spent in dressing a tree for a family of boys, sat down upon the floor of a stately hall and played marbles with many a reminiscent word about "alleys" and long-forgotten terms of the game. Something so vital had come to them in handling and admiring and labelling these toys that they were children again for the moment and believed in Santa Claus in the old heart-warming way. Keen sportsmen both, they raised air-guns to their shoulders, and ran a sharp glance down the barrels, and smacked whips and admired toy soldiers, and were wholly at the mercy of the ruling spirit of the night.

What shall take us out of ourselves? Alas! how seldom does such a blessed power arise and control us. Here it is now coming fast

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## Christmas Thoughts

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upon us, though the heavens are dark, and the wind is cold, and the sun comes late and leaves early ; there must be a hard crust of selfishness and a bitter spirit of discontent to build a barrier that can stay its progress. To one who is not absolutely world-hardened there is this one chance in the year to be “out of it all” and in touch with joy and gratitude, and to kindle by the flame of the Christmas candles warm fires of happiness and comfort in strange places where they were never felt before.

It was said of old in a vision of perfect peace that “a little child should lead them,” and if we would feel the essence of the Christmas joy it must be through the touch of children’s hands and in unison with their happy hearts. Perhaps the radiance of the face of Him who was “in a manger laid” is yet reflected in their innocent eyes.

### XXXI

#### FASCINATION OF THE UNKNOWN FUTURE

**A**MONG the influences which men universally feel is that which arises from the unalterable, arbitrary divisions of time. We cannot logically account for it, but it is an hour of mysterious charm which closes the last day of the old year and opens the gate for its successor.

The quaint custom, of Scandinavian origin, which bids the master of the house open his door at five minutes before midnight and wait in silence until the last stroke of twelve announces that one year is dead and another born, is full of the feeling of expectation which rises forcibly in every heart and mind alive to hope and fear. The vigil of the dying year is very far away in its purport from the benevolent, cheery watch before the fire on Christmas Eve.

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## Fascination of the Unknown Future

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Inward, unsaid, go our thoughts, and the past holds us with detaining strong hands, saying imploringly, "Do not forget"—the unrecallable, irrevocable past, out of whose clutch we can wrest nothing and which has taken away so much. Let the dead year have given what it may, at its death-bed we think most and longest of what it has taken from us.

And when the clock above our hearthstone, or the tall old timekeeper which has measured many lives to their end, or the deep voice from the church spire, utters the final sound and the last moment has come, how few there are whose hail to the new-born is one of genuine joy or of ardent hope. To-morrow in the sunshine, with friendly hands in ours, we shall believe good days await us; at midnight we would fain keep the old year yet a little longer, afraid before the hidden secrets of his successor.

And what possibilities arise to fascinate us either with joy or fear! Each of us sees that which lies hidden away in the deep of the heart, growing into vigorous life or fading as

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## Home Thoughts

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the year that has gone has done, while he or she peers into that shadowed future which no man can shape or control. How this scrutiny, this yearning gaze into the unrevealed, covers all life's varying schemes and dreams !

The father and mother to whom the time has come when their children have grown into men's and women's estate, and for whom they can no longer build protecting walls : in this new year the eldest son will say farewell to "alma mater" and take up the burden of his self-support ; the daughter is only waiting that the roses shall bloom to grace her wedding, to take her sweet presence for ever away from the old home ; the youngest son will be launched into the strife and struggle of a great boys' school. None left to need the guiding-hand ; what will the new year bring to these emancipated lives ?

The young wife and husband greeting the new year for the first time in their own home : Out of the unknown of the coming months will a little life come, and the next new year find a third loving heart under the roof they

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## Fascination of the Unknown Future

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have builded? When these months have run their course, will their lives be thus perfected and the cup of joy be full to the brim?

Will the man who spends this last hour brooding and pondering over great schemes, his wife shadowed by his sombre look of thought and troubled by the absorbed gaze which sees what is invisible to her, be as rich and powerful as he now hopes when this new year has fulfilled its destiny? Or will it bring failure and defeat and bitter humiliation? He is glad when the loving voice beside him says tenderly, "A Happy New Year, dear heart," and thrusts the dreadful possibility back into the darkness.

The aged hearts sitting in the midst of the generations descended from their parentage: how they scan the veiled horizon asking for their fate. Is this to them the last New Year? Has the beginning of the end come for them?

No wonder that the majority of religious people keep the vigil of New Year's eve with prayer. No wonder that whisperings are heard outside the windows from which men

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## Home Thoughts

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look, that in the chimney corners seem to lurk spirits of good and evil destiny, alert to seize the first moment of the new day.

None who think or feel, come to this “parting of the ways” unmoved, and happily in most breasts arises a spirit of resolution at least to shape their own conduct, that which alone they can control, on better models than heretofore, and to determine on some achievement worthy of performance. If we could but take counsel with the lost past, how often would we aim more humbly and therefore come nearer success; not trying to make a general attack all along the lines of our mistaken lives, but deliberately to take one weak point and carry it by storm, and hold it impregnable against all the assaults with which the past fights to retain its hold. The making one well-considered resolution and holding to it is like turning the enemy’s flank in a battle,—the whole opposing force feels the shock and weakens. To grasp little and hold hard seem elements of success too little considered.

“The past year lies before you,” says a

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## Fascination of the Unknown Future

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wise man with an awful verity which I think few realize as mothers do. "The results of the past are the future. We go on to meet them. There are evolutions downward as well as upward, and the past years ever lie before us." How this verifies and attests itself in the lives of our children! What vigilance it incites in a mother's heart to control the temptation to over-indulgence, to quell deceitful inclinations in their inception, to put bit and bridle on the varying tendencies which, hardening into habits, become in the future true rocks of offence! How often would it nerve a tired parent to persevere and win a victory could the error of to-day take the guise of next year's evil habit!

And in our households how this truth stands up and confronts us. If we have lived beyond our means this year, how terribly hard it will be to live within them in the next. How much harder to retrench than to go forward; how mortifying the reduction of a manner of living which we should never have attempted! The past year lies before us.

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## Home Thoughts

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If want of due authority and neglect of that self-denying, trying duty of ruling our households, our children and servants, as we ought, in order to insure that their rectitude and fidelity are at the proper level, has given us now a dominion corrupted by eye-service and untruth, it is the bequest of that past in which lies our future ; all we can do is to fight it where it stands, and look to it that the new year grows no more such harvests for our reaping.

Courage and confidence in the sure results of those things which cannot fail must be the two upholders of our life as we cross the mysterious midnight barrier beyond which lies the path we shall have to tread, let our wills say what they may. No trouble but will take on a new shape under the pressure of determination to make the best of things as they are, and to be undaunted in the face of fear means that the soul and mind are nourished by a sustenance stronger than the world.

To look forward and be afraid is to be defeated before the battle ; to seize every

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## Fascination of the Unknown Future

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vantage point of hope and joy, to conserve every ray of light, to make much of every passing pleasure, is to lay up stores of ammunition for whatever combat taxes our strength.

There is an especial pleasure in believing that a new spirit is astir in the land which promises a widespread increase of real happiness to our young people, and it is delightful to think that the generation just forming their plans for their new homes are largely preparing to seek their happiness in simpler, healthier ways than has been the fashion among the last. Men are more ready to begin to live on moderate incomes; there is more talk of the home than of its plenishing. The children of wealthy families are less averse to begin modestly and demand little from the resources of their parents. Very happy beginnings have been made, and are in prospect, where a small apartment forms the domain, and one efficient woman the sole servant.

Where the homes are suburban, a large proportion of the newly married can and do

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## Home Thoughts

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own their pretty, simple cottages, by help of the building and loan associations, and a few years hence this past will "lie before" in such a smooth, self-respecting position of dignified ownership as makes a man able to write the word Home in large capitals. It is not alone the place where he lives; it is a part of himself, available for all the improvement he can afford to put upon it, and subject to no man's will but his own.

If the mothers and wives of this portion of our country, in which luxury and beauty are more tempting than almost anywhere else in the United States, could start each new year with a strong purpose to lend a hand toward the increase of this impulse, and set themselves to rule houses notable for hospitality which involved no lavish expenditure and yet were both inviting and elegant; if they could become the exponents of the beauty of refined simplicity and the teachers of what a wealth of loveliness is obtainable without great cost, and free from imitation of prevailing foreign customs, the new year bells would truly "ring out the false" and usher in the true.

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## Fascination of the Unknown Future

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Beyond the thronging ideas with which we determine to idealize and elevate our own home life, it enriches our whole view of this duty to take in the silent influence of what we do on the lives about us, especially on the young householders and home-makers beginning that dearest occupation of man or woman. That from our own fireside shall go forth a persuasion to the young hearts around it to find in "high thinking and plain living" a satisfaction which never palls; that from us shall radiate a light that shows the foundation of home to rest on the absolute truth of all our relations to men and things, will not be an insignificant contribution to the prosperity and happiness of every new-born year. More largely than we believe, our future lies in our own control, and let us not forget that "no man liveth unto himself alone."

THE END



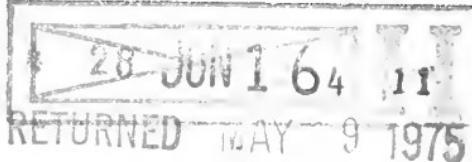


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